Baroque Stucco Marble Altars: Materials, Conservation and Meaning



LJUBLJANA, 15-16 SEPTEMBER 2026

Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS


Zavod za varstvo
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Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency

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Programme and Organising Committee:
Katja Kavkler, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Restoration Center**; Matej Klemenčič,** University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts; **Martina Vuga**, University of Ljubljana, Academy of Fine Arts and Design; **Frančiška Oražem**, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts; **Sara Turk Marolt,** University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts;

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UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA FKKT Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology

DAY 1

Tuseday, 15 September 2026

Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia

09.00 - Registration of Participants

09.30 - Opening Remarks

Barbara Jaki (Director, National Gallery of Slovenia)
Jernej Hudolin (Director, Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, director)
Katja Kavkler (Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Restoration Center)
Matej Klemenčič (Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana)

10.00 - Session I - Materials and Techniques - Chair: Renata Tišlová

Lea Legan - Janez Kosel - Irena Kralj Cigić - Barbara Štuhec - Polonca Ropret, Material Characterization of Historic Stucco Marble in Slovenia: Organic Signatures, Degradation Products and Conservation Traces
Katja Kavkler, Inorganic Materials in Baroque Stucco Marble: Overview of Their Use on Altars in Slovenia
Greta Acquistapace – Alberto Felici, Scagliola Antependia in Baroque Altars: A Survey in Southern Switzerland

11:30 Coffee break

12.30 - Session II - Conservation Methods I - Chair: Alberto Felici

Katharina Fuchs – Maria Engl – Angela Strik – Farkas Pintér – Tanja Bayerova – Marta Anghelone – Martina Griesser-Stermscheg – Marija Milchin, Fragile Illusions of Baroque Splendour: Conservation of the Scagliola Interior in the Retirade, Schloss Hof in Lower Austria
Aleš Vene, Research and Conservation-Restoration Work on the Altar of St. Bernard from the Former Church of the Cistercian Monastery in Kostanjevica na Krki
Katharina Fuchs – Marija Milchin – Christoph Schleßmann – Zdeněk Kovářík – Zdeňka Míchalová – Renata Tišlová, Baroque Artificial Marble Between Bohemia and Austria: The Case of St. George's Chapel in Český Krumlov

13:30 Lunch break

15.00 - Session III - Conservation Methods II - Chair: Katja Kavkler

Martina Vuga - Eva Lucija Krajnc, Use of Recent Methods and Materials for Cleaning Stucco Marble Surfaces

Renata Tišlová – Zdeněk Kovářík, Surface Treatments of Baroque Stucco Marble Altars: Materials, Techniques, and Conservation

Špela Govže – Saša Stržinar Sterle – Nina Žbona, Challenges in Stucco Marble Consolidation and Aesthetic Presentation

16:30 Coffee break

17.00 - Session IV - Artists, Workshops, and Artistic Networks I - Chair: Jana Zapletalová

Katharina Fuchs, Early Scagliola Work and Its Impact on Viennese Interiors around 1700

Martin Krummholz, Giacomo Antonio Corbellini – Apostle of Artificial Marble in Bohemia?

Zuzana Macurová – Zdeňka Míchalová, The Scagliola Landscapes of Josef Winterhalder the Elder

19:30 Dinner (for conference speakers and organisers)

DAY 2

Wednesday, 16 September 2026

Ljubljana, National Gallery of Slovenia

09.00 - Session V - Artists, Workshops, and Artistic Networks II - Chair: Martin Krummholz

Kinga Blaschke - Michał Kurzej, Stucco Marble Altars in Vilna: A Glimpse at the State of Research and Perspectives

Anna Ancāne: Baroque and Rococo Stucco Altars in Latvia, Artistic Interconnections and Regional Typology

Jana Zapletalová, Luxury Without Marble. Johann Hagenmüller and Artificial Marble as Artistic and Economic Capital in the Workshop of Baldassarre Fontana

10:30 Coffee break

11.00 - Session VI - Artists, Workshops, and Artistic Networks III - Chair: Matej Klemenčič

Sara Turk Marolt, Bavarian Stucco Artists in Present-Day Slovenia: Reconsidering their Arrival, Networks, and Early Activity

Frančiška Oražem, Johann Lindenthaller – a Mysterious Marmorierer from Goričane Manor. Rewriting Old Research

Vlasta Zajec, Stucco Marble Altars in the Region of Slavonia

Martina Ožanić, From Wessobrunn via Ljubljana to Zagreb – New Insights into the Life and Work of Johann Martin Gigl

13:00 Lunch break

15:00 Guided tour of Ljubljana's stucco marble altars

ABSTRACTS

GRETA ACQUISTAPACE – ALBERTO FELICI

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Scagliola Antependia in Baroque Altars: A Survey in Southern Switzerland

In Southern Switzerland, some of the most important scagliola workshops hailing from northern Italy (Valle d'Intelvi) have left some of their most precious artworks.

To deepen the knowledge on their materials, degradation phenomena, and conservation issues, between 2019 and 2021 the Conservation-Restoration Unit of the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Southern Switzerland in Mendrisio led the research project "The Conservation of Scagliola Antependia".

Based on the preliminary overview of over 200 works present in the region, approximately 20 objects have been studied and scientifically investigated. It was possible to highlight different techniques, conditions, and assess conservation issues related to environmental exposure. A Technical documentation form was developed, together with an Illustrated Glossary containing a specific terminology of materials, techniques, and deterioration phenomena. These documents are conceived as a methodological tool to guide the observation and recording, providing structured support to conservation professionals.

Microscopic analysis, combined with microchemical tests and portable X-Ray fluorescence, provided information on the types of gypsum, pigments, and dyes being used. The supports contained no lime; the meschie had a limited use of Selenite and a predominant use of sedimentary gypsum rocks. The analytical campaign also revealed the use of pigments that were rarely employed in other artistic techniques in this region, such as cinnabar, vermilion, orpiment, and indigo. The analysis of cinnabar showed the typical alteration (darkening) of this pigment, which was also observed in recently restored scagliola (on polished surfaces).

During the survey, several objects in poor condition were identified. The study of decay phenomena, with particular attention to salt species, highlighted the main sources of degradation to humidity and human intervention. Mainly nitrates associated with capillary rise, and magnesium sulfate deriving from restoration materials were identified.

This study has contributed to enhancing awareness among conservator–restorers and heritage officers of the refined workmanship and inherent fragility of scagliola antependia, while also emphasizing the importance of adopting preservation strategies consistent with contemporary conservation principles.

Greta Acquistapace is a conservator-restorer, holding a Master's degree from SUPSI in the conservation and restoration of wall paintings, stuccoes, and stone surfaces. Since 2019, she has worked as a teaching assistant for the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at SUPSI, focusing on the study and conservation of scagliola antependia. The results of this research are available open access: https://zenodo.org/records/10717361. She worked as a Research Support Officer at the University of Malta and currently practices as a freelancer.

Alberto Felici is a conservator-restorer and art historian, graduated from the University of Florence. Since 1987, he has carried out several conservation-restoration works on mural paintings, stuccoes and stone materials. Lecturer and researcher at the Opificio delle Pietre Dure (OPD) in Florence from 2001, since 2019 he has been part of the Heritage Office SABAP in Florence. Since 2008, he has collaborated with SUPSI (Scuola universitaria professionale della Svizzera italiana) as a lecturer and researcher. The results of this research are available in open access: https://zenodo.org/records/10717361.

ANNA ANCĀNE

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Baroque and Rococo Stucco Altars in Latvia: Artistic Interconnections and Regional Typology

In the 18th century, the territory of present-day Latvia became a crossroads for European stucco craftsmanship, where the grand traditions of the "Vilnius Baroque" met the refined "Friderician Rococo" of Prussia. This paper explores the phenomenon of stucco altars and decorative sculpture in Latvia, with a particular emphasis on the sacral heritage of Latgale (Eastern Latvia), where the art of stucco reached its zenith as a primary medium for liturgical theatricality.

In the Catholic churches of Latgale, the development of stucco altars was deeply rooted in the Counter-Reformation and the activities of influential monastic orders (Jesuits, Dominicans). Drawing inspiration from Andrea Pozzo's treatises and the "Vilnius Baroque" school, master craftsmen created monumental, scenographic altar ensembles that achieved a synthesis of architecture and sculpture. The paper will analyze the typological group of Latgalian stucco altars, focusing on the masterpieces in Pasiene, Piedruja, and Dagda. Special attention is given to the High Altar of Pasiene (1761–1770), where the inherent plasticity of stucco allowed for the creation of an expansive, multi-layered teatro sacro. Furthermore, the paper will discuss the chronological development of this tradition, culminating in the late 18th century architectural stucco altar of the Aglona Basilica.

To provide a broader regional context, these Eastern Latvian examples will be contrasted with the developments in the Duchy of Courland, where the arrival of the Bavarian master Johann Michael Graff introduced a different aesthetic—the delicate, ornamental Rococo of the Berlin-Potsdam circle. By comparing the scenographic Baroque of Latgale with the decorative Rococo of Courland, this study reveals the diverse technical applicationsof stucco and the complex networks of artistic exchange in the Baltic region during the late Baroque.

Anna Ancāne (Dr. art.) is a Senior Researcher at the Art Academy of Latvia and Head of the Architecture and Art Department at the National Heritage Board. Her research focuses on Early Modern architecture and art in the Baltic region, specifically the migration of artists and the dissemination of printed models. She is a key contributor to the fundamental series Art History of Latvia, authoring chapters on Early Modern architecture and stucco sculpture. Her expertise bridges academic research with the practical evaluation of restoration and conservation projects in Latvia. She has authored numerous scientific publications, including a monograph on architecture and urban planning of 17th-century Riga.

KINGA BLASCHKE – MICHAŁ KURZEJ

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Stucco Marble Altars in Vilna: A Glimpse at the State of Research and Perspectives

Vilna (Lith. Vilnius, Pol. Wilno), the early modern capital of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, was the only city in the region to function—albeit intermittently—as a significant artistic centre. The period of its greatest flourishing fell in the middle decades of the eighteenth century, when most of its churches were either newly built or thoroughly remodelled. A characteristic feature of these undertakings was the decoration of interiors with ensembles of marbled stucco altars. Several such ensembles survive to this day in Vilna itself, along with a few noteworthy examples in the provinces.

Typically, the high altars and the accompanying arch altars formed coherent compositions that interacted effectively with dynamic façades and elaborate tower terminations, constituting an important element of the local architectural idiom. Previous scholarship, however, has largely been limited to describing this phenomenon—often labelled "Vilnian Rococo"—and has only rarely attempted to identify the makers of these altars or to analyse the techniques of their execution. The issue of architectural design has likewise been unnecessarily complicated by attributions that lack sufficient foundation.

The Vilnian stucco altars deserve to be regarded as a phenomenon within eighteenth-century European architecture. Their refined, dynamic forms and carefully conceived curvilinear compositions often stand in contrast to the rather coarse architecture of the buildings in which they are set. Likewise, the high quality of their architectural design frequently creates a dissonance with comparatively weak figural sculpture. Their significance thus lies in the striking, yet in some respects superficial, modernisation of church interiors.

It may be assumed that their emergence resulted from a local fashion that engaged designers and marblers of considerable skill, but not equally accomplished figure sculptors or builders. Since questions of authorship cannot be resolved without a comprehensive programme of archival and material research, the proposed paper will focus primarily on the distinctive position of stucco altars within the art of Vilna and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, as well as on their significance for broader narratives of Lithuania's cultural specificity.

Kinga Blaschke is an assistant professor at the SWPS University in Cracow. Her academic interests include the history and theory of art and graphic design; propaganda and manipulation in art and art history, particularly during the communist era; myths in art history; and the sociology of art and design. She examines how social issues are reflected in the visual arts. Author of two books and dozens of scholarly articles.

Michał Kurzej is a professor at the Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University. He specialises in seventeenth-century art, art theory, and architecture. He is the author of three books and around eighty articles, mainly devoted to early modern art, many of which concern stucco decoration. He is the head of the Polish section of the project STUDEC – Stucco Decorations Across Europe. He has also published a monograph on Sebastian Piskorski—a prominent artistic expert of the late seventeenth century—as well as a critical edition and translation of the Instructiones fabricae et supellectilis ecclesiasticae (with Piotr Krasny, 2021).

KATHARINA FUCHS

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Early Scagliola Work and Its Impact on Viennese Interiors around 1700

Works made of stucco marble (scagliola) were produced in what is now Austria at various points in history. The earliest evidence of this technique can be found around 1600 in the form of portable table tops, which were probably given as diplomatic or courtly gifts. It was not until the 17th century that scagliola found application in more permanent ecclesiastical contexts, including antependia and altars. While the names of certain artists and workshops have been preserved, many others remain unknown, leaving gaps in the reconstruction of artistic networks and the transmission of techniques.

By examining the early dissemination of scagliola in Austria, it becomes possible to formulate hypotheses regarding the spread of technical knowledge. In particular, overlapping professional activities in stucco and scagliola appear to have played a decisive role. Craftspeople trained in stucco work may have encountered or adopted the more complex scagliola technique through collaboration, mobility, or workshop exchange. Such intersections between construction sites and professions likely facilitated the transfer of specialized know-how across regions and generations. The analysis of documented works, archival references, and stylistic parallels allows for a closer understanding of how this knowledge circulated and was adapted to local contexts.

The present contribution argues that a systematic study of these early implementations is essential for understanding the later, more comprehensive scagliola decorations that characterize numerous interiors in Vienna. In order to assess the development of scagliola interiors, it is crucial to identify where, when, and by whom the technique had previously been practiced, and in what formal variations. By mapping early centers, this paper seeks to lay the groundwork for a more nuanced interpretation of Viennese scagliola programs. Ultimately, it aims to stimulate further research and scholarly exchange on the origins, transmission, andregional adaptation of this refined decorative technique

Katharina Fuchs has been a University Assistant at the Conservation Institute at the University of Applied Arts Vienna since 2018. After graduating in 2014, she worked primarily in the conservation of stucco and scagliola at the Viennese company Thomas Mahr. In 2017, she acted as a sabbatical replacement in the Department of Conservation at the Austrian Federal Monuments Authority, specializing in stone conservation. In addition to her academic position, which includes collaboration on numerous international projects (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Israel, Malta, Mongolia, Montenegro, Nepal, Serbia, and Switzerland), she served as a project manager at an Austrian stone conservation company until spring 2021. In 2024, she completed her doctorate with a dissertation on scagliola interiors in nineteenth-century Viennese palaces and continues to conduct research on stucco and scagliola decoration.

KATHARINA FUCHS – MARIA ENGL – ANGELA STRIK – FARKAS PINTÉR – TANJA BAYEROVA – MARTA ANGHELONE – MARTINA GRIESSER-STERMSCHEG – MARIJA MILCHIN

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Fragile Illusions of Baroque Splendour: Conservation of the Scagliola Interior in the Retirade, Schloss Hof in Lower Austria

The present study focuses on the documentation, analysis, and conservation of a side room of the Sala Terrena - known as the so-called Ritarde - at the Schloss Hof estate (Lower Austria), with particular emphasis on its gilded stucco and scagliola (stucco marble) decorations. The aim is to systematically assess the existing historic fabric and its state of preservation in order to develop a well-informed conservation strategy.

The assessment combines on-site examination with material analyses and detailed condition mapping to evaluate previous interventions, current deterioration phenomena, and the material-specific characteristics of the decorative surfaces. On the basis of these findings, a conservation concept is proposed that ensures both the preservation of the historical substance and the long-term stability and legibility of the interior.

Visual inspection and laboratory analyses are undertaken to identify the material composition of the decorative surfaces and the mechanisms of deterioration. The findings are recorded in detailed condition and damage mappings and supported by a comprehensive photographic survey. In parallel, extensive literature review and archival research is conducted to reconstruct the room's history, and previous conservation interventions.

Based on the condition assessment, a conservation concept is developed that prioritizes the consolidation and preservation of the historic fabric through a minimal-invasive approach, in contrast to the more extensive restorative interventions carried out in adjacent rooms. The critical review of relevant literature on the conservation of gilded surfaces, stucco, and scagliola forms the base of the methodological framework. The proposed methods are first tested on trial areas to evaluate their suitability and effectiveness. The remedial conservation measures are realized collaboratively with students of the stone conservation class at the Conservation Institute of the University of Applied Arts Vienna as part of their practical training.

The project contributes to the development of sustainable conservation strategies for Baroque interior decorations, especially for scagliola surfaces.

As part of the diploma training in stone conservation at the Conservation Institute, University of Applied Arts Vienna, students are required to complete a pre diploma project in their fourth year of study. Within the framework of the project at Schloss Hof, **Maria Engl** and **Angela Strik** were responsible for the assessment of the object's condition and state of preservation, and for developing a conservation treatment concept; their findings formed the basis of their written pre-diploma theses. The supervising senior stone conservators were **Marija Milchin** and **Katharina Fuchs**. In the laboratory, conservation scientists **Farkas Pintér, Tanja Bayerova**, and **Marta Anghelone** carried out the material investigations and supported the condition assessment. The project was led by **Martina Griesser-Stermscheg**, head of the institute. In addition to the individuals mentioned above, all students of the stone conservation class including Erasmus students participated in the practical realization of the project

KATHARINA FUCHS – MARIJA MILCHIN – CHRISTOPH SCHLESSMANN – ZDENĚK KOVÁŘÍK – ZDEŇKA MÍCHALOVÁ – RENATA TIŠLOVA

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Baroque Artificial Marble Between Bohemia and Austria: The Case of St. George's Chapel in Český Krumlov

Interdisciplinary research into the monumental scagliola decoration of St. George's Chapel at the State Castle and Chateau in Český Krumlov examined Baroque artificial marble in its artistic, technological, and historical context. Covered almost entirely in artificial marble, the chapel is one of the most remarkable examples of this technique in Europe and a unique example of mid-18th-century sacred decoration in an aristocratic residence listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The decoration, designed by Andrea Altomonte and executed between 1750 and 1753 by the marble worker Mathias Andrea, is examined in relation to Andrea's works in the Czech and Austrian regions. A comparative analysis reveals characteristic stylistic features, technological nuances, and changes in marble work in the mid-18th century, contributing to a broader understanding of artistic exchange and the mobility of artistic craftspeopleship between the Czech and Austrian environment.

The research is being conducted as part of an international collaboration between the Faculty of Restoration at the University of Pardubice and the Institute of Conservation at the University of Applied Arts Vienna, with the participation of master's and doctoral students. The in situ workshop model integrates research, education, and international knowledge exchange. The article presents the methodology, initial analytical results, and a broader interpretative framework that situates the Krumlov decoration within the Central European development of Baroque artificial marble.

Katharina Fuchs (Mag. Dr.), stone conservator, specializing in stucco and scagliola.

Marija Milchin (Mag.), stone conservator, specializing in the effects of climate change on outdoor stone monuments.

Christoph Schleßmann (BA), photographer.

Zdeňka Míchalová (Mgr. Ph.D.), art historian, specializing in Renaissance culture and art.

Renata Tišlová (Ing. Ph.D)., material engineer specializing on traditional building materials and techniques.

Zdeněk Kovářík (MgA.), stone conservator; Ph.D. candidate specializing in stucco marble in Central Europe.

ŠPELA GOVŽE – SAŠA STRŽINAR STERLE – NINA ŽBONA

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Challenges in Stucco Marble Consolidation and Aesthetic Presentation

Stucco marble refers to an imitation of polished stone made from gypsum and pigments, usually mixed with an animal glue and lime. While it is exceptionally durable in a stable, dry environment, it is also highly porous and, due to its gypsum base, reacts quickly to moisture. Therefore, stucco marble exposed to high humidity can sustain severe damage. The migration and crystallisation of water-soluble salts on and beneath the surface are closely linked to high moisture levels. The increase in volume resulting from subflorescence creates stress within the material. Consequently, the stucco marble loses its shine, the surface cracks, and begins to flake. Over time, the material gradually begins to crumble and disintegrates completely. Biological decay, such as mold growth, is often associated with high moisture levels. Significant deterioration is also caused by human factors. This includes not only deliberate vandalism, such as graffiti and scratches, but also damage caused by ignorance and a lack of knowledge. Finally yet importantly, inappropriate restoration interventions can also cause damage on stucco marble.

In the past, finding a consolidation agent compatible with stucco marble was a challenge. However, with the development of new conservation materials available, such as nanolime-based products, this is no longer an issue. One of the key challenges that remains is the replacement of missing parts. Based on various projects we have worked on in the past, we can demonstrate different methods for restoring damaged or missing sections: reconstruction using the stuccomarble technique, reconstruction using the monochromatic stuccomarble mortar with retouched patterns or application of plaster and painting in a base tone or retouching the stone patterns.

The field of stucco marble conservation is evolving, and so are we. Therefore, we constantly ask ourselves whether we have chosen the right approach or applied the most appropriate method. There are always more questions than answers, and we would certainly approach some interventions differently today than in the past. What is essential, however is that when conserving stucco marble objects, we follow professional guidelines in terms of minimal intervention, material compatibility and retreatability, i.e. ensuring the possibility of future intervention rather than reversibility — which unfortunately often proves impossible in practice. Of course, we must always take into account the context and specific characteristics of individual objects. In the case of altars, their liturgical function must also be considered.

Špela Govže, Saša Stržinar Sterle and **Nina Žbona** are conservator-restorers working at the Restoration Centre of Slovenia's Institute for the Protection of the Cultural Heritage in the Stone and Stucco Conservation department. Nina Žbona is the head of this department. In recent years, she has developed new approaches to the conservation of outdoor bronze sculptures based on international guidelines. Špela Govže and Saša Stržinar Sterle work on stone monuments, stucco decorations, and stuccomarble. Among other projects, they were responsible for the stuccomarble conservation work at Grubar Palace niches, the St. Ana's altar on Bled Island, and the Maribor Minorite Church pilasters.

KATJA KAVKLER

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Inorganic Materials in Baroque Stucco Marble: Overview of Their Use on Altars in Slovenia

Stucco marble is a heterogeneous mixture of organic and inorganic constituents. The main inorganic component is gypsum and its polymorphs. Several additional inorganic materials can be added as pigments, fillers, or unintentional impurities. In the present study, we focus on all types of inorganic materials and take organic pigments into account.

The range of inorganic constituents identified in our study is limited. However, combining different materials at different ratios and using different processing methods produced a wide variety of appearances.

The main constituent of all the analysed stucco marble masses was calcium sulphate dihydrate. Anhydrite or hemihydrate were also sometimes observed. The presence of magnesite impurities in certain masses could help to narrow down the probable sources of gypsum.

Furthermore, differences in the use of fillers were observed. In certain masses, no fillers were observed; in most, however, either calcite, dolomite, or a mixture of both was observed.

Finally, the masses differ due to the use of different pigments. Some pigments are universal and were found in most of the analysed altars. These include red earths (identified as the mineral hematite) and carbon-based black pigments. Two yellows were identified: yellow earths (the mineral goethite) and orpiment. Of particular interest is the use of indigo as a blue pigment. Sampling revealed that most indigo-pigmented structures have bleached to some extent. Not many green masses were observed, but it seems that one author also used green, copper-based pigments to colour the masses. Other pigments were identified sporadically, often only in retouchings or later additions.

Although the limited use of inorganic materials and pigments made it difficult to categorise altars by author or workshop, it could still assist art-historical research. Furthermore, the appearance of stucco masses under stereo- and optical microscopes can be categorised by specific properties (e.g. pigment distribution), providing additional information.

Katja Kavkler graduated in Conservation-Restoration from the Academy of Fine Arts and Design at the University of Ljubljana, subsequently completing her PhD in Textile Sciences at the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Engineering at the same university. She has been employed at the Natural Sciences Department of the Restoration Centre of the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia since 2011, and has been its head since 2012. As well as textiles, her main areas of research focus on the biodegradation of historical materials and heritage material science in general.

MARTIN KRUMMHOLZ

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Giacomo Antonio Corbellini – Apostle of Artificial Marble in Bohemia?

Based on the findings resulting from recent interdisciplinary research, it has been possible to capture in a more comprehensive way the artistic work of the leading High Baroque stucco artist Giacomo Antonio Corbellini (1674 – 1742), who became the most renowned creator of artificial marble in the territory of present-day Germany (Ludwigsburg, Weingarten and other locations) in the second stage of his artistic life. In recent years, it has been possible to document his previously unknown or only little-known early works in Bohemia, Moravia and Germany, including preserved altars. Based on the research and formulated working theses, it is now possible to consider when and where Corbellini learned the technology of artificial marble, and how important his role was in the arrival of this innovation in the Bohemian (and Moravian) environment.

Martin Krummholz is an art historian working at Palacký University in Olomouc. His research topics include Baroque architecture and stucco, aristocratic residences, early landscape gardens and Czech sculpture at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. He is the author of numerous monographs and scholarly articles published both in the Czech Republic and abroad. He has prepared and curated, among others, the exhibition Stanislav Sucharda 1866 - 1916: Tvůrčí proces / Creative Process (National Gallery Prague 2019/2020), created a guide to the Troja Chateau (2017) and new exhibitions of František Bílek in his Prague villa and in Chýnov (2022).

LEA LEGAN - JANEZ KOSEL - IRENA KRALJ CIGIĆ - BARBARA ŠTUHEC - POLONCA ROPRET

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Material Characterization of Historic Stucco Marble in Slovenia: Organic Signatures, Degradation Products and Conservation Traces

The composition of the inorganic matrix of historic stucco marble is relatively well established; however, the organic additives, often uniquely formulated by individual craftsmen, remain far less understood. This study therefore focuses primarily on the identification and characterization of organic components present in historic stucco marble. More than fifty artefacts from across Slovenia were examined using a combined non-invasive and micro-invasive analytical approach to investigate original binders, surface treatments, degradation products, and traces of later conservation interventions.

Initial FTIR spectroscopy in reflection mode enabled rapid, in situ detection of organic spectral features alongside the mineral matrix. As organic components occur in low concentrations and are often masked by the strong infrared activity of gypsum, targeted extraction of organic binders was performed prior to further analyses. A combination of FTIR, ELISA and GC-MS revealed the presence of proteins (egg ovalbumin, collagen and hemoglobin), fatty acids and long-chain organic compounds characteristic of both linseed oil and beeswax, consistent with traditional binding media and historical protective coatings.

Natural resins and gums were also identified, together with guanine, suggesting the use of complex organic additives characteristic of historical decorative technologies. In several samples, additional unidentified organic compounds were detected, indicating either intricate multi-component formulations or advanced degradation processes.

Non-invasive FTIR measurements frequently revealed calcium and/or magnesium oxalates, which can be associated with natural ageing processes or with the transformation of earlier organic surface coatings. Furthermore, the presence of siloxanes detected in several artefacts confirms the application of siloxane-based consolidants, providing clear evidence of 20th-century conservation interventions.

Although the mineral matrix was also characterized to support the interpretation of organic signals, the results primarily highlight the diversity and complexity of organic materials used in historic stucco marble technology. The study provides new insights into the composition and function of organic additives in Slovenian stucco marble, contributing to its interpretation, conservation, and restoration.

Lea Legan, MSc in Chemistry, is a specialist in infrared and Raman spectroscopy for the characterisation and preservation of cultural heritage materials at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and National Museum of Slovenia.

Janez Kosel holds a PhD in Biotechnology and is a Conservator-Restorer at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia and has expertise in immunology, microbiology, and genetics.

Irena Kralj Cigić is Professor of Analytical Chemistry at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology and her main research interest is analytical chemistry, where she focuses on separation techniques, mainly gas and liquid chromatography coupled to mass spectrometry.

Barbara Štuhec is a master student at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Chemistry and Chemical Technology.

Polonca Ropret holds PhD in Chemistry and is the head of Research Institute at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia. She is also the National Coordinator of E-RIHS Slovenia and co-director for infrastructure at GreenHer Centre of Excellence.

ZUZANA MACUROVÁ – ZDEŇKA MÍCHALOVÁ

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The Scagliola Landscapes of Josef Winterhalder the Elder

Josef Winterhalder the Elder (1702–1769) came from a family of sculptors active in the Baden region. However, he spent most of his professional life in Moravia, where he settled after studying at the Vienna Academy. Within the Moravian artistic milieu, he soon established himself as a versatile sculptor, highly sought after by both the Church and the aristocracy. While his work is dominated by stone and stucco, he also specialized in stucco marble, particularly for church commissions.

Winterhalder's stucco marble work is unique within the Moravian context. Using the scagliola technique, he created landscape scenes on several altars (St. Thomas's Church in Brno; the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Uherský Brod; St. Martin's Church in Třebíč; St. Nicholas's Church in Znojmo). These scenes depict both vedute of specific towns (Uherský Brod, Třebíč) and fantastical landscapes that complement the iconography of the altars (the high altar of St. Thomas's Church in Brno; the Holy Cross altar in the Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Uherský Brod). The paper will present Winterhalder's unique stucco marble realizations, place them within the broader context of his oeuvre, and describe their current state of preservation.

Zuzana Macurová is assistant professor at the Department of Art History, Faculty of Arts, Palacký University Olomouc, Czech Republic. Her research focuses on art patronage in the early modern period, visual culture as a medium of representation and self-presentation, and art and religion in the 17th and 18th centuries. She is currently working on a research project '(Self-)Presentation of Women in Early Modern Portrait Painting'.

Zdeňka Míchalová is head of the Department of Humanities, Faculty of Restoration, University of Pardubice, Czech Republic. Her research concentrates on early modern visual culture, history of conservation and technical art history. She participated on research projects focused on Renaissance art in Czech lands. She is currently a member of the team compiling a catalogue of stucco-marble works in the Czech Republic.

FRANČIŠKA ORAŽEM

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Johann Lindenthaller – a Mysterious Marmorierer from Goričane Manor. Rewriting Old Research

This paper examines the creation of stucco marble decoration in the chapel of Goričane Manor in Slovenia. In the 1740s, the chapel was transformed with a Baroque decorative scheme executed in stucco marble, encompassing not only the altar but the entire interior. The grand hall on the first floor of the manor was decorated in a similar manner.

Previous research attributed the authorship of the stucco work and stucco marble to Johann Wolfgang Auracher, the so-called Klagenfurt stucco master. However, newly examined archival sources redefine his role as that of a Ljubljana-based merchant responsible for supplying materials during the renovation of the manor.

Recent findings have revealed the name of a previously unidentified marmorierer, Johann Lindenthaller, who is also documented in archival sources as the author of the side altar of Saint Notburga in the filial church of St. Barbara above Škofja Loka.

This reassessment not only clarifies the authorship of the Goričane stucco marble decorations but also contributes to a broader understanding of material practices and the mobility of artists into the mid-18th-century Inner Austrian lands.

Frančiška Oražem, PhD (2024), is a researcher at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Art History. Her research focuses on 17th- and 18th-century altar architecture and sculpture. She is currently involved in the project Stucco Marble Altars in Slovenia: Materials, Conservation, and Meaning and works as a conservator at the Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia.

MARTINA OŽANIĆ

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From Wessobrunn via Ljubljana to Zagreb – New Insights into the Life and Work of Johann Martin Gigl

The artistic journey of Johann Martin Gigl (Gigel, Gigill), a stucco master, painter and gilder, is fairly well documented throughout the early 19th century until his death in 1826, primarily due to his collaboration with Maksimilijan Vrhovac, the Bishop of Zagreb. However, the earlier phase of his career prior to his arrival in Zagreb, where he was first mentioned in August of 1784, has remained largely obscure. The search for his origins leads to Wessobrunn in Bavaria, the leading centre for stucco artists, where he was baptised on November 11, 1753, to Johann Georg Gigl, a renowned stucco master in nearby Haid (Hayd), and his second wife Maria Anna Zimmermann. Archival documents trace Martin Gigl in Ljubljana as early as January 1777, when he was mentioned in the Marriage Records of the Parish of St Peter, and only a few months later, in April, he received a commission to build the parish church's new high altar *von Gips Marmorisirtem*. Despite the difficulties encountered during its construction, the final work appears to have been well received and highly regarded, and he became a citizen of Ljubljana in 1780. This study aims to fill the existing biographical gap with new data that invites a reconsideration of his formative influences, while also reconstructing the networks and artistic exchanges among stucco masters active in Ljubljana, Zagreb, and other Central European artistic centres in the late 18th century.

Martina Ožanić defended her doctoral thesis at the Department of Art History at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb in 2017. Since 2004, she has been employed at Regional Conservation Department in Zagreb, where she works as a senior expert consultant-conservator for movable cultural property. She actively participates in both the work of professional associations and the organization of scientific and professional conferences. She has authored numerous scientific and professional papers focusing on 17th- and 18th century art in continental Croatia, with a particular emphasis on sculpture and altar architecture, as well as on the protection and preservation of cultural heritage, specifically movable property and wall paintings.

RENATA TIŠLOVÁ– ZDENĚK KOVÁŘÍK

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Surface Treatments of Baroque Stucco Marble Altars: Materials, Techniques, and Conservation

This contribution examines the surface treatments of Baroque works made from stucco marble and critically reflects on current restoration practices. Stucco marble, also known as scagliola, is a highly sophisticated art technique—both technologically and aesthetically—in the context of Central European Baroque art. Its visual effect was determined not only by the color composition and structure of the marbling, but also by varying degrees of polishing, lighting conditions, and its relationship with the architectural plan. The surface created by the artist is an integral part of the work's meaning and its impact on space. Nevertheless, restoration has long relied on standardized procedures, such as full-surface regrinding, repolishing, and waxing—methods rooted more in the craft traditions of the 19th and 20th centuries than in authentic Baroque techniques. Such interventions often result in the irreversible loss of original material, traces of authorship, and subtle optical nuances that were crucial to the dramatic and luminous effects of Baroque interiors.

The paper therefore questions the legitimacy of restoring stucco marble to an "absolute gloss" and calls for a reassessment of traditional ideas about the ideal appearance of restored artworks. This paper aims to initiate a professional discussion on the responsible restoration of artificial marbles —emphasizing respect for their technological diversity, artistic individuality, and historical context, while also ensuring long-term sustainability.

Renata Tišlová received her Ph.D. from the Polish Academy of Science in Cracow, Poland. Since 2025, she is a Head of the Department of Chemical Technology at the Faculty of Restoration, University of Pardubice (Czech Republic). In recent years, she has been focusing on research into traditional building materials from the (Early) Modern Era up to the 20th century. She has participated in several international and national projects concentrated on stucco, historic mortars or scagliola, on which she has been published several papers and monographies.

Zdeněk Kovářík is a restorer specialized in stone, stucco, and scagliola. Since 2023, he has completed his Ph.D. at the Faculty of Restoration, University of Pardubice, focusing on the history of Baroque scagliola in the Bohemian and Moravian regions. He has recently led several projects on scagliola, including a project to develop a Czech Baroque scagliola database.

SARA TURK MAROLT

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Bavarian Stucco Artists in Present-Day Slovenia: Reconsidering their Arrival, Networks, and Early Activity

This paper examines the earliest documented presence of Bavarian stucco artists in the territory of present-day Slovenia, with particular focus on the period from 1737 onwards. The earliest evidence is associated with Ljubljana, where the master Nicolas Reissmayer is documented between 1737 and 1742, and, almost simultaneously, with St. Roch's Church in Šmarje pri Jelšah, where the stucco artists Franz Resch, Johann Rauch, and Joseph Gebhardt are mentioned in connection with the church's renovation.

Reissmayer's documented activity in Ljubljana, together with stylistic similarities between his altar at St. Florian's Church and several early stucco-marble altars elsewhere in the region, suggests a considerably broader sphere of activity than previously recognised. At the same time, a closer examination of the chronology of the decoration at Šmarje and Kostanjevica calls into question the traditional understanding of Resch, Rauch, and Gebhardt as a single group of Wessobrunn stucco artists working there simultaneously.

The comparison of documented evidence, dated works, and stylistic features thus reveals a more complex chronology and previously unrecognised connections among the stucco artists involved. It also points to the wider Styrian and Graz context as a possible intermediary network through which Bavarian stucco artists reached the territory of present-day Slovenia. These findings offer a more nuanced understanding of their arrival and early activity and call for a reassessment of the chronology and attribution of early stucco-marble commissions.

Sara Turk Marolt, PhD (2024), is a researcher at the University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Art History. She currently holds a postdoctoral research grant from the Slovenian Research Agency (ARIS). Her research focuses, among other topics, on Baroque stucco-marble altars in Slovenia as part of the project Stucco Marble Altars in Slovenia: Materials, Conservation, and Meaning. She has contributed to multiple national research projects, and her interests include Baroque altar architecture, provenance studies, and medieval mural painting.

ALEŠ VENE

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Research and Conservation-Restoration Work on the Altar of St. Bernard from the Former Church of the Cistercian Monastery in Kostanjevica na Krki

Altars crafted using the stucco-marble technique are unique cultural heritage objects due to their combination of artistic styles, techniques, materials and purposes. The ravages of time also take their toll on this sacred cultural heritage, which is why the right approach to its preservation is of the utmost importance. We can examine it from religious, iconographic, historical, sociological and artistic perspectives, but as conservators and restorers, we focus primarily on its material aspects – the manufacturing technology, the materials used, and their state of preservation. For an optimal approach to restoration, it is necessary to conduct thorough research of the altar's material substance, the environment in which it is located and to study its history.

The altar of St. Bernard, originally crafted for the Cistercian monastery in Kostanjevica na Krki, was sold following the dissolution of the monastery and moved to a new location in the parish church of St. Bartholomew in Šentjernej. Made of various materials, the altar combines a variety of techniques and, as a whole, represents the pinnacle of mid-18th-century technology and art. From an architectural perspective, it was crafted with a specific purpose in mind and for a specific location within the church of the Cistercian monastery in Kostanjevica na Krki. Therefore, the interventions carried out during the altar's relocation to adapt it to its new environment caused damage that we are now able to professionally repair using appropriate methods and materials. Given the value and significance of this sacred cultural and artistic monument, a conservation and restoration program, including research, was developed as part of the first phase of the main altar's restoration. An assessment of the state of preservation was conducted, with a particular focus on iconographic analysis.

Based on this, a framework was developed for both the methods and procedures used to identify and uncover the original forms and paintings. We confirmed the data obtained regarding the age of individual overpaintings through probing and microscopic examination of samples. The results of the investigations showed that the altar had been repainted several times and that previous interventions had been carried out on it, resulting in negative outcomes. All these methods and procedures were prerequisites for the successful development of a conservation-restoration program and the implementation of the interventions.
The program focused primarily on preserving the original structures to the greatest extent possible, minimizing harmful environmental impacts, and carrying out reconstructions using original technologies and materials, thereby restoring the building's overall appearance to its optimal condition.

Aleš Vene graduated from the Wood Technology School in Maribor. He was employed at the Diocesan Restoration Workshop and, after three years, became the head of the carving department at the Diocesan Organ Workshop in Hoče.He later enrolled in the Restoration program at the Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana. During his studies, he researched the technology and formulas for producing stucco marble and wrote his thesis on this topic. After completing his studies, he was hired as the head of the conservation and restoration workshop at the Posavje Museum in Brežice. He currently works as a conservator-restorer at Galerija Božidar Jakac – Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art in Kostanjevica na Krki. He is the recipient of the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Fine Arts and Design Prize (2006/2007), of the Mirko Šubic Award (2012), the Murko Award (2022), and University of Ljubljana, Academy of Fine Arts and Design Prize (2011/2012).

MARTINA VUGA - EVA LUCIJA KRAJNC

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Use of Recent Methods and Materials for Cleaning Stucco Marble Surfaces

Stucco marble is highly sensitive to water, primarily due to the presence of gypsum and animal glue. Cleaning such surfaces is particularly challenging, as the aim is to remove dirt without damaging the original material while still using only a controlled amount of water sufficient to dissolve surface dirt.

In recent years, various methods and materials have been developed for cleaning water-sensitive surfaces, including the natural biopolymers agar and gellan gum, as well as Nanorestore hydrogels. Owing to their high water-retention capacity, which allows them to release only small, controlled amounts of water onto the surface, these materials are well suited for the treatment of water-sensitive substrates.

The project focused on developing a safe and systematic methodology for cleaning stucco marble. Cleaning tests were carried out on the Altar of Christ's Wounded Shoulder in the Church of St. Florian in Ljubljana, where the stucco marble surface is coated with oil and wax. Various combinations of aqueous cleaning solutions and hydrogels were evaluated. In addition to pre-formed agar and gellan gum gels and Nanorestore hydrogels, a newly developed hydrogel from the Greenart project was also tested. The application of agar in spray form was likewise assessed, as this technique appears particularly suitable for cleaning large and irregular surfaces.

The results provide a methodological basis for selecting appropriate cleaning systems and highlight the need to balance cleaning efficiency with the preservation of the material and visual integrity of the surface. The study also emphasizes the importance of systematic preliminary testing for each individual object

The findings also suggest that, in cases where safe and selective cleaning cannot be adequately achieved, postponing treatment may be a justified option. Rather than restoring the original gloss, conservation-restoration seeks to preserve the naturally aged appearance of the surface while safeguarding as much original material as possible.

Martina Vuga is an Associate Professor of Conservation-Restoration at the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Fine Arts and Design. She previously worked as a sculpture conservator at the National Gallery of Slovenia, where she also served as Head of the Conservation–Restoration Department. Her main research interests include the conservation of polychrome wood and plaster casts, as well as conservation materials and methods, with a particular focus on cleaning.

Eva Lucija Krajnc is MA student at the University of Ljubljana, Academy of Fine Arts and Design. She graduated with the diploma thesis Conservation and restoration treatment of surfaces made in the stucco marble technique. Her interests are centred on polychrome wood, with an emphasis on the materials science of conservation treatments, particularly cleaning processes and the removal of film-forming surface materials.

VLASTA ZAJEC

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Stucco Marble Altars in the Region of Slavonia

The presentation focuses on new findings on stucco marble altars commissioned in the 18th century in the region of Slavonia. Alongside an analysis of the context of their commission, their typological and morphological characteristics will be analyzed, as well as their position within the context of stucco marble altar production in the region of northern Croatia.

The altar in the sanctuary of the Church of the Transfiguration of Christ in Piškorevci near Đakovo is dated by an inscription in 1769. Subsequent polychromy completely negated its original appearance, but the research assumption that it is a stucco marble altar was prompted by a significant typological similarity with the stucco marble altar erected two years earlier in the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Sotin. Recently conducted restoration sondages have confirmed that assumption. The church in Piškorevci was built by Josip Antun Čolnić (1699–1773), Bishop of Đakovo, who most likely was also the commissioner of the main altar. This agile prelate was also responsible for the baroquization of the old Đakovo cathedral, for which he procured four new altars. Fragments found during archaeological research of the old Đakovo cathedral indicate that its main altar was also made of stucco marble. The assumption is further confirmed by the fact that a significant amount of as much as 1500 forints was spent on its creation. In terms of style and morphology, the altars in Piškorevci and Đakovo fit into the group of stucco marble altars created in the second half of the 18th century in the area of northern Croatia, which in earlier research were linked to the workshop of the Ljubljana stucco artist Josef Göbhardt (Jožef Gebhard) (1715 – before March 4, 1798).

The presentation will also discuss stucco marble altar in the sanctuary of the Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Nova Kapela, built in 1773-1774, whose material was not recognized in previous reviews. The question of its commission as well as of its typological characteristics will be discussed.

Vlasta Zajec is a senior research associate at the Institute of Art History in Zagreb. She got master degree in 1995 (17th Century Wooden Altars in Istria), and doctoral degree in 2001 (17th Century Wooden Sculpture in Istria), both from Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb. In 2014 she published a monograph Studies on wooden altars and sculpture of the 17th century in Istria. She is the author of numerous book chapters and scholary articles in domestic and international publications. Her main research interests are Baroque altars and sculpture in Istria and Northern Croatia as well as Christian iconography.

JANA ZAPLETALOVÁ

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Luxury Without Marble. Johann Hagenmüller and Artificial Marble as Artistic and Economic Capital in the Workshop of Baldassarre Fontana

With the approaching anniversary of the pilgrimage site at Svatý Kopeček near Olomouc, the Premonstratensians resolved to undertake a radical modernization of their basilica, then only forty years old. Artificial marbles played a crucial role in this sensitive and conceptually sophisticated renovation entrusted to Baldassarre Fontana (1661-1733). Fontana brought with him the prominent marble specialist Johann Hagenmüller, who had previously worked for the Liechtenstein princely family in Vienna as well as for other distinguished patrons across Central Europe. Fontana immediately recognized the exceptional potential of artificial marble and of collaboration with Hagenmüller. It enabled him to endow his complex and monumental projects with a new level of exclusivity, luxury, and the convincing appearance of costly materials through highly persuasive marble imitation. The partnership with Hagenmüller significantly enhanced both the artistic and economic capacity of Fontana's flourishing workshop and provided a competitive advantage over other major stucco workshops active in Central Europe.

The construction of new altars and artificial marble wall revetments allowed Fontana to fundamentally transform the decorative concept of sacred space of the pilgrimage church. He moved away from what was likely already an outdated approach in his time — one practiced in Central Europe by earlier generations of artists from present-day Ticino and neighbouring parts of Lombardy — toward visually far more elaborate interiors offering remarkable illusionistic effects and spatial complexity.

Previously unpublished contracts and other preserved archival documents make it possible to reconstruct the workshop practices and methods of collaboration between these two significant artists. The contracts also stipulate that very specific types of real marble should be imitated and provide information about prices, surface area, execution time, and work procedures.

The paper will present the circumstances and broader context of the collaboration between Fontana and Hagenmüller, their workshop practice, and the significance of this strong partnership both for Fontana's workshop. It will also address the question of the extent to which artificial marbles functioned as an instrument of confessional prestige and power between the Jesuits and the Premonstratensians in Olomouc.

The construction of new altars and artificial marble wall revetments allowed Fontana to fundamentally transform the decorative concept of sacred space of the pilgrimage church. He moved away from what was likely already an outdated approach in his time — one practiced in Central Europe by earlier generations of artists from present-day Ticino and neighbouring parts of Lombardy — toward visually far more elaborate interiors offering remarkable illusionistic effects and spatial complexity.

Jana Zapletalová received her Ph.D. in Art History from Palacký University in Olomouc. She completed part of her studies at Alma Mater Studiorum - Università di Bologna and Università degli Studi di Milano. She is specialized in early modern art. She has published dozens of articles on artists from the area of today's Italy and southern Switzerland, who were active in the 16th-18th century in Central Europe. She has long specialized in the artistic migration of artists and artisans from the Lake Lugano area. In 2025, she was a Visiting Professor at Sapienza Università di Roma in Italy.

NOTES



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