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Unknown designs from the collection of the Na Piasku Carmelite Monastery in Kraków¹

Surviving 17th- and 18th-century designs for "church furniture" in Kraków collections

It is proper to start from stating that modern design drawings for what sometimes is referred to as "church furniture" for what is broadly construed as the art of Małopolska, preserved in Kraków collections, are an exceptional rarity.

In 2014, the Polish Art Historians Association (SHS) held a national conference on *Ornament and Decoration of the Work of Art.*² It was accompanied by a modest exhibition, or, rather, a display, presenting models

- 1 I extend heartfelt thanks to Dr Szymon Sułecki, head of the Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio, for his assistance and making the research on the drawings possible.
- 2 The post-conference materials were published in *Ornament i dekoracja dzieła sztuki*, ed. by J. Daranowska-Łukaszewska, A. Dworzak, A. Betlej, Warszawa 2014.

and designs of works of church furniture, also described as "small-scale" architecture, accompanied by a concise catalogue.³ It may be worth recalling that, besides the items unrelated to Kraków art that nonetheless made their way to Kraków collections mostly from monasteries in Silesia and can be found in the Jesuit Archive, and ones of similar provenance that are in private collections, there were only four sketches of altar structures and other elements of furnishing intended for sacred spaces that belong to modern art (or more precisely, the art of the 17th and 18th centuries) and the area of Kraków and, more broadly, Małopolska. That, by the way, is the number of drawings mentioned in the article of Father Adam Błachut, who discussed the works in the Archive of the Reformed Franciscans in Kraków. ⁴ The same designs are mentioned by Anna Dettloff in her doctoral dissertation. ⁵ The design found by Joanna Daranowska-Łukaszewska presenting a retable that may perhaps be linked to Francesco Placidi was not presented at the exhibition, but only found its way to the catalogue.⁶ What should also be remembered is the drawing of the pulpits in the Church of St John in Kety (in private collection) associated with either Piotr Rojowski, or, if the piece was really brought from Moravia, a work of a an unknown local artist.7

Expanding the scope beyond the Kraków collections, it is valid to remember that one more design, stored in the Bernadine Monastery in Tarnów and made known in a popular publication on its history was discovered later. Then came another one, more extensively analysed

- 3 A. Betlej, A. Dworzak, Abrys, delineatio, kopersztych... czyli "przednie rysowane, godne poszanowania, dobrych magistrów rysunki". Projekty dzieł małej architektury ze zbiorów krakowskich, Kraków 2014.
- 4 A. J. Błachut, *Plany kościołów i klasztorów reformackich z XVII i XVIII w. w Archiwum Prowincji Franciszkanów-Reformatów w Krakowie*, "Studia Franciszkańskie" 3 (1988), p. 178, items 15, 16, 31, 33.
- 5 A. Dettloff, Rzeźba krakowska drugiej połowy XVIII w.: twórcy, nurty i tendencje, Kraków 2013, p. 40.
- 6 A. Betlej, A. Dworzak, Abrys, delineatio, kopersztych..., p. 14.
- 7 A. Dettloff, Rzeźba krakowska..., p. 153; see: M. Kurzej, A. Dettloff, Rzeźba krakowska drugiej połowy XVIII w.: twórcy, nurty i tendencje, Kraków 2013, Wydawnictwo AFM, Kraków 2013, 384 pp, 442 figs [review], "Modus. Prace z historii sztuki" 15 (2015), p. 287.
- 8 *550 lat OO. Bernardynów w Tarnowie 1459–2009*, ed. by F. Rydzak, Tarnów 2016, p. 16.

and hypothetically connected to the activity of a Jesuit architect, Father Paweł Giżycki, known to have created as yet unidentified "outlines" for Sanguszko foundations in Tarnów. Moreover, merely for completeness, the design by Kacper Bażanka for the epitaph slab of Father Żuchowski for the collegiate church in Sandomierz must be mentioned, as well as Francesco Placidi's design for the tomb of Cardinal Jan Aleksander Lipski for the chapel of Kraków Cathedral. The list should also include three Camaldolese designs for the stalls and two altars (including the main retable)—the more precious as they date back to the 17th century. Any study should, however, exclude the drawings by Father Sebastien Sierakowski found in the Library of the Jagiellonian University, as most of them are later (classicist) works and drawings from the 1770s of academic nature, and were mostly prepared during the young Jesuit's studies in Lwów and Jarosław colleges.

Wrapping up this overview, currently, we can only speak of ten (Sic!) designs for furnishing related to Kraków (Małopolska) art from the 17th and 18th centuries. As this highly limited study of state-of-the-art research demonstrates, the historical material is as scant as it is unsystematic. This is highly telling for the specific character of the Kraków sculptural circles, especially in the 18th century. On the one hand, plenty of sculptural and carpentry projects were completed in Małopolska in that century,

- 9 A. Betlej, *Stare tarnowskich ołtarzów abrysy*, "Pietas et Studium" 5 (2015), pp. 255–261.
- 10 U. Stępień, Przemiany wnętrza kolegiaty sandomierskiej w pierwszej połowie XVIII wieku w świetle nowo odkrytych archiwaliów, in: Między Wrocławiem a Lwowem. Sztuka na Śląsku, w Małopolsce i na Rusi Koronnej w czasach nowożytnych, ed. by A. Betlej, K. Brzezina-Scheurer, P. Oszczanowski, Wrocław 2011, p. 261; A. Dworzak, Fabrica Ecclesiae Sandomiriensis. Dzieje modernizacji wnętrza kolegiaty sandomierskiej w XVIII wieku w świetle źródeł archiwalnych, Kraków 2016, p. 60.
- 11 A. Betlej, *Nieznany projekt nagrobka Jana Aleksandra Lipskiego*, "Studia Waweliana" 5 (1996), pp. 191–192.
- 12 I am working on a separate publication on the *Bielański Codex*, a collection that includes drawings by Giacomo Baston. See: A. Betlej, M. Walczak, *Giacomo Baston—nieznany architekt na usługach Janusza Ostrogskiego*, in: *Artyści włoscy na ziemiach południowo-wschodniej Rzeczypospolitej w czasach nowożytnych*, ed. by P. Łopatkiewicz, Rzeszów–Łańcut 2016, pp. 199–224.
- 13 J. Lepiarczyk, Wczesna działalność architektoniczna Sebastiana Sierakowskiego: projekty barokowe (1769 –1775), "Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Prace z historii sztuki" 6 (1971) no. 9, pp. 199–224.

yet on the other, the number of the material testimonies to those, such as drafts and designs, is next to negligible. Significantly, the doctoral dissertation by Paulina Kluz about the Kornecki family, ¹⁴ being the "last word" when it comes to the studies of 18th-century sculpture in what is broadly construed as Małopolska artistic circles, mentions no newly discovered designs. And yet, considering the large numbers of foundations, even for statistical reasons, one should expect to find more surviving designs, even should one account for the historical turmoil and disasters that have swept the Polish lands, decimating the preserved source materials.

The situation, however, is far from extraordinary. When gathered together, the number of designs related to the more significant Lwów sculptor circles of the 18th century that dominated the artistic panorama of their contemporary Poland (should we disregard Sierakowski's sketches mentioned above) is even smaller: a total of nine. Moreover, the case with the Warsaw environment is similar, as the latest study of Warsaw 18th-century sculpture only lists five designs, and that including the works from the Dresden archive materials of the Warsaw Bauamt!

- P. Kluz, *Korneccy: rodzina artystów i jej działalność w Małopolsce od połowy XVIII do połowy XIX wieku*, Warszawa 2022, doctoral dissertation written under the tutelage of Professor K. Mikocka-Rachubowa at the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences (PAN) in Warsaw.
- This set consists of five altar designs (for the Roman Catholic church in Jarosław, church of an Eastern Rite in Pleśniska, and for a fireplace) by Father Paweł Giżycki SJ (see: Paweł Giżycki SJ. Architekt polski XVIII wieku, Kraków 2001, pp. 112–113, 134–136), an as yet unresearched design for a coffin-shaped rococo reliquary (?) crowned with Christ's monogram, decorated with rocaille and campanula ornaments, in the collections of the Stefanyk Library in Lviv (see: A. Betlej, Uwagi na temat twórczości architektonicznej Marcina Urbanika, "Modus. Prace z historii sztuki" 3 (2002), p. 20, ft 46) and Maciej Polejowski's design of the tabernacle for the main altar in the Latin Cathedral in Lwów (J. T. Petrus, Domus Sapientia Leopoliensis, in: Sztuka kresów wschodnich, vol. 3, ed. by J. K. Ostrowski, Kraków 1998, p. 224, fig. 6; A. Dworzak, Polejowscy. Karta z dziejów lwowskiego środowiska artystycznego w drugiej połowie XVIII wieku, Warszawa–Kraków 2020, pp. 133–134).
- J. Sito, Wielkie warsztaty rzeźbiarskie Warszawy doby saskiej. Modele kariery formacja artystyczna organizacja produkcji, Warszawa 2014, pp. 184, 196, 259. Another item that may be included int this list is a design for the Dominican Church in Lublin attributed to Johann Georg Plersch (see: J. Sito, Johanna Georga Plerscha nieznany projekt ołtarza głównego w kościele dominikanów w Lublinie, "TECHNE. Seria Nowa" (2018) no. 2, pp. 23–44). The case of the Warsaw circles in the 17th century



1. Concept work for an altar with the main panel including a designed perspective, early 18th c. (?). Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio

The designs discovered in the Carmelite Monastery

A handful of designs were recently found in the Na Piasku Carmelite Monastery. They are five early modern drawings depicting altar structures. and two later ones (probably from the late 19th or early 20th c.) showing a design of tracery and cupboards for the sacristy. The circumstances of this chance find unfortunately provide no assurance that the designs refer to the Carmelite Church in Kraków. 17 Nor are there any hints allowing to link them to any other church of the order, or, indeed, with any church at all. It also remains unknown when the drawings could find their way to the monastery in Kraków, and whether their origin is in any way connected with it. It is a plausible hypothesis that the collection was formed absolutely haphazardly or artificially, for instance it might have belonged to an anonymous monk-collector and/or archivist. All the works were pasted on blue cardboard, which at the moment renders testing the paper impossible. One of the works is probably only a part of the original concept. The drawings bear no information as to the scale to which they were drawn.

The first of them (Fig. 1) presents an elaborate architectural structure built of pairs of staggered columns, the inner ones, twisted towards the axis being of the Solomonic type. The whole construction received a relatively extensive pendentive composed of complex volutes terminating in a segmental cornice with semicircular central part. The central panel contains the Ark of Covenant surrounded by a radiant gloria with winged cherub heads, while the crown of thorns in another gloria is featured in the crowning. From the point of view of construction, the central panel is especially interesting, as it consists of supports diminishing stepwise to create a perspective that is emphasised further by the drawn divisions that imitate the flooring of the interior. Apart from this device, the whole design is of poor artistic quality, verging on amateurish. A proof of the designer's lack of professionalism is the crowning, drawn in a totally crooked manner, as well as the form of the cartouche below the upper tier. The consistent use of Regency ornamentation allows dating the work

is different, as a significant set of works from this period has been preserved in the Tylman van Gameren collection in the Library of the University of Warsaw (see: P. Wątroba, *Rysunki architektoniczne i dekoracyjne. Tylman van Gameren*, vol. 1–2, Warszawa 2019; see there also for earlier literature).

17 The drawings were discovered amongst a trove of unsorted materials that are systematically being incorporated into the collection of the Archive.



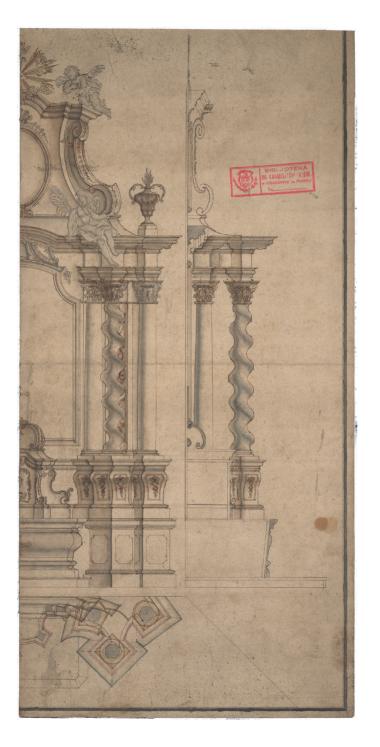
2. Design for a rood screen altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary, c. 1730 (?). Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio

to the 1730s. Michał Wardzyński used to study such a "perspective" solutions experiencing the acme of popularity in 17th-century altarpieces. Referring to the Marian Altar in the Dominican Church in Gidle (1669–71), he referred among others, to the altarpiece in Grodzisko near Skała (1675–90), and also pointed to the altar in Topola Królewska near Łęczyca (after 1711), to which the design of the retable in the Carmelite collection shows certain general similarities. The work from the collection discussed here could be considered the last in thus defined sequence of origin.

Unlike the first, the second design (Fig. 2) stands out for its exceptionally high artistry. It depicts an altar dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary intended for a corner inside the church, possibly by the rood beam. The structure is constructed from staggered pseudo-pilasters, with outwardly wyłamane drips/volutes added diagonally above the altar table. The whole is richly decorated and has a highly elaborate iconography. The cartouche on the antependium holds Penance of Mary Magdalene, and an elaborate cartouche is placed over the door of the tabernacle decorated with a representation of the Eye of Providence. The niche in the central panel holds a sculpted representation of the Blessed Virgin. The volutes embracing the central structure are ready to receive the figures of St Sebastian and St James the Apostle. The panel in the pediment sports a representation of a chalice with a host, while a figure of St Charles Borromeo stands over the profiled cornice. Somewhat lower, on the sides, they are flanked by putti holding an hourglass and a book. Thus designed, the retable presents itself as a highly elegant structure with a clear and legible composition, skilfully reinforced with sophisticated sculpted decoration. This crisp, sculptural drawing is executed perfectly well and with considerable freedom, an evident reference to designs that could successfully be executed in what is broadly construed as the lands of the Holy German Empire. If not for the actually small scale of the altar, one could surmise that it may be the altar in one of the Bavarian Gnadenstaetten. The note in Schwabacher script on the side is, unfortunately, highly illegible. Proposed dating for this sketch are the 1730s or 1740s.

The third of the designs (Fig. 3) presents a monumental retable intended for the polygonal closure of the chancel, while the structure's

¹⁸ M. Wardzyński, Rzeźba nowożytna w kręgu Jasnej Góry i Polskiej Prowincji Zakonu Paulinów 1720–1675, vol. 1, Warszawa 2009, pp. 221–222; see also: A. Dettloff, P. Dettloff, Domus Aurea. Architektura i sztuka dominikańskiego sanktuarium Matki Bożej w Gidlach 1516–2016, Warszawa 2016.



3. Design for the main altar, c. 1730–40 (?). Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio

4. Design for an altar dedicated to St Peter and St Paul, c. 1730–40 (?). Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio



scale suggests it was likely designed as the main altar. Only a half of the design, representing one of the alternative solutions, has been preserved, as evidenced by the broken frame enclosing the drawing. The architectural structure dynamically extending to the sides it presents was essentially to be built on what, accounting for the plan of the richly moulded and textured tabernacle, is a concave-convex arc/undulating curve. The upper tier was to include a cluster of three columns gathered together on a high, two-tier base, with the innermost one having a twisted shaft. The supports were intended to support an expansive entablature, above which, a pediment enclosed by diagonally set volutes was placed on the central axis. The sculptural decoration was limited to the figure of an angel and cherubs in the pediment. It should be noted that this design shows influences from the Augsburg pattern books of Johann Michael Leuchte, engraved by Martin Engelbrecht as part of the series Unterschiedliche Neu Inventierte Altäre mit darzu gehörigen Profillen u. Grundrißen, 19 dated to the 1720s, which sets the post quem boundary for dating the design, and is moreover aligned with the highly consistently applied Regency ornamentation, which allows to date the whole project to the 1730s or 40s.

The fourth design (Fig. 4) reveals a structure that was likely dedicated to Peter and St Paul. The altar, composed of a picture frame closed with a concave-convex arch, with pronounced, sculptural "ears" housing multipartite but empty heraldic shields, is framed by wide portals bearing statues of the saints, adjoining its bottom section at an angle. The tabernacle is designed very dynamically, as indicated in the plan below. There is a sculpture of a cherub holding a wreath and palm of martyrdom above the abundant pediment of the retable formed into a cartouche. Its field bears a representation of St Peter expelling an evil spirit. Such structures are very rarely, if at all, encountered in the furnishing of Małopolska churches, even if they are present, for instance, in the works of Johann Georg Lehner, who was active in the area in the 1740s. Yet they come from his Moravian period of creativity: the altars in Kietrz, Staré Lublice, and Město Albrechtice.²⁰

¹⁹ For the sketches, see e.g.: A. Betlej, *Zbiór augsburskich "rycin ornamentalnych"*, Kraków 2003, p. 4.

²⁰ For Lehner's activity, see: K. Brzezina, *Rzeźba i mała architektura sakralna księstw opawskiego i karniowskiego w XVIII wieku*, Kraków 2005 (Ars Vetus et Nova, 16, ed. by W. Bałus).

The last (Fig. 5) altarpiece can be presumed to have been intended for a chapel or a niche in a church of the wall-pillar type. Most precisely drawn, with scumbling (imitating marbling) on the columns, the drawing presents a structure based on Palladian motif (or Serlio's type), yet built on a concave plan of half-columns and free-standing (outer) columns, with a very lavish pediment filled with a radiant gloria. The sculptural decoration consists of a statue of a female saint holding a lily in her hand and presumably St Joachim (the central panel might have been intended for a representation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, as a Marian monogram can be seen in the gloria in the cresting. The pilasters on the sides of the retable feature two large figures (bas-reliefs? stucco?) of angels holding censers. The ornamental work employing rocaille in the pediment prompts dating this design to the second half (third quarter) of the 18th century.

All that can be stated at the moment for the wrap-up of the review presented above is that the five designs were executed in five different artistic conventions, in five different ways of drawing. Generally, the drawings are highly dissimilar, and, rather than forming a uniform set, can even be described a haphazard collection. Save for a single sketch, as ornamentation suggests, they all should be dated before mid-18th century. Only the last of the drawings described above received a linear scale, which nevertheless lacks such details as units of measurement. None of the works corresponds to any specific location in the Na Piasku Carmelite Church in Kraków.

Concluding, it would be hard to link the drawings with specific known representatives of the Kraków sculpture circles of the 18th century. With respect to the proposed dating, their potential execution by for example Wojciech Rojowski must be ruled out, even if he worked for the Na Piasku Carmelites in the 1770s. In an article devoted to the original decor and furnishing of the Carmelite Church, and later in her book, Anna Dettloff, drew attention to the person of Brother Grzegorz Kaczyrek, repeatedly mentioned in the archives of the Na Piasku Monastery in 1742–70, as he allegedly acquired his sculpting skills in Moravia. According to sources, he chiselled five sculptures for the side altars of St Adalbert the Carmelite, St Elizabeth, St Teresa of Avila, St Hedwig (Jadwiga) of Silesia, St Regina,

21 A. Dettloff, Zespół osiemnastowiecznych ołtarzy bocznych w kościele Karmelitów na Piasku w Krakowie – próba określenia stanu pierwotnego i kwestia autorstwa, "Rocznik Krakowski" 69 (2003), pp. 123–138; A. Dettloff, Rzeźba krakowska..., pp. 264–265, 329–330.



5. Design for a side altar in the Serlian style, c. 1760– 70 (?). Archive of the Discalced Carmelites from Na Piasku Monastery in Kraków. Photo by the Wawel Royal Castle Digitisation Studio and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in the church's aisles, and also participated in the decoration of the altar in the Chapel of the Brotherhood of the Holy Scapular. ²² Only the second of the designs discussed above shows a distant resemblance to the structure of the Altar St Adalbert (currently devoted to St Queen Jadwiga) in the representation of the tabernacle.

In the context of the remarks made above, it is difficult to propose a more decisive conclusion. Perhaps what we deal with is a section of a handy *Klebeband* of a sculptor or carpenter who worked for the Carmelites? The similarities indicated above are so general that it would be hard to judge categorically that the drawings were owned by such a person, or that such a monk ever based anything on any of them. Further research will quite likely have to rely on lucky chance, just like the one that made the discovery of the sketches possible.

²² A. Dettloff, Rzeźba krakowska..., pp. 264–265.

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Abstract

Andrzej Betlej Unknown designs from the collection of the Na Piasku Carmelite Monastery in Kraków

The article describes five altar designs that were discovered in the Na Piasku Monastery of Calced Carmelites in Kraków. Absence of any information about the origin of the drawings makes it impossible to determine which specific church they were intended for. The discovered drawings can be dated to a period from the beginning of the 18th century to the 1770s. They feature various artistic solutions and were made by different artists. Assuming they were intended for churches in what historically was Małopolska, they significantly increase the number of sketches preserved and published in the literature. One of them is evidently a work of by a German-speaking artist, while the others seem to be the works of guild woodcarvers (or carpenters) or monastic artists. They might have been part of a collection of sketches that could have belonged to Brother Grzegorz Kaczyrek, a Carmelite repeatedly mentioned in the archives of monastery in 1742–70 as the maker (and designer) of retables in the Na Piasku Church

Keywords:

altars, designs, patterns, Kraków, 18th century

Abstrakt

Andrzej Betlej Nieznane projekty ze zbiorów klasztoru Karmelitów "Na Piasku" w Krakowie

Artykuł został poświęcony pięciu projektom ołtarzy, jakie zostały odkryte w klasztorze Karmelitów Trzewiczkowych "Na Piasku" w Krakowie. Brak jakichkolwiek informacji o pochodzeniu rysunków uniemożliwia określenie ich przeznaczenia do konkretnego kościoła. Odnalezione rysunki, które można datować od początków XVIII wieku po lata 70. tego stulecia, prezentują odmienne rozwiązania artystyczne i zostały wykonane przez różnych artystów. Przy założeniu, że były one przeznaczone dla świątyń w historycznej Małopolsce, prace te w znaczącym stopniu zwiększają liczbę szkiców zachowanych i publikowanych w dotychczasowej literaturze. Przynajmniej jeden z nich został ewidentnie wykonany przez artyste niemieckojęzycznego, pozostałe wydają się być dziełami snycerzy (bądź stolarzy) cechowych albo zakonnych. Można rozważać hipotezę, że stanowiły one część podręcznego zbioru szkiców, jaki mógł należeć na przykład do brata Grzegorza Kaczyrka, wielokrotnie notowanego w latach 1742–1770 w archiwaliach klasztoru "Na Piasku" w Krakowie, jako wykonującego (i projektującego) retabula w krakowskiej świątyni.

Słowa kluczowe:

ołtarze, projekty, wzory, Kraków, XVIII wiek