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Emaux sur verre recently discovered in Poland

In one of the provincial churches in Poland an extremely interesting tabernacle has been preserved¹. It was donated around 1740 by a member of the powerful Polish aristocratic family of Sapieha for a monastery complex built at his own expense and was destined for the sepulchral chapel of the founder. For the decoration of the tabernacle a large set of manneristic enamels "en résille sur verre" was used. Of the initial number of 90 enamels, 67 plaques still exist. Such a large set is in itself quite an event in our days, since, so far as I know, there are in European collections only a few single enamels executed with this rare technique².

The aim of this article is to present the Polish set of enamels in order to render possible their comparison with other such objects which are at present in various collections³.

The problem of enamels en résille sur verre is not yet definitely elaborated. Existing enamels are generally estimated to have originated in the first quarter of the 17th century, but nothing certain is known with respect to the localisation of the workshop in which they were manufactured. An assumption prevails that it was probably only one workshop, and to its ephemeral activity almost all hitherto known enamels sur verre are assigned. The localisation of

the workshop remains at all events hypothetical. Among various hypotheses, France has often been mentioned – but with a question mark⁴.

The whole series of enamels found in Poland have figural representations. Their themes are mythological and allegorical, which constitutes the second specific feature of our tabernacle, but this problem, however interesting as such, will not be discussed here, as it is beyond the scope of our considerations.

The set consists of 67 plaques, rectangular or oval, of various sizes. They are executed on a rich blue opaque or colourless transparent and red foiled glass. The technique is identical in all of them. Multicoloured transparent enamels are combined with opaque ones. The latter are mostly used in the narrow belt forming the border of the composition, and they are used very sparingly, in small details. Larger parts, particularly the flesh of the figures, are covered with a transparent colourless enamel which discloses a golden foil of the ground. The range of colours is rather limited and includes in transparent enamels intensive red, green, sky-blue, light brown and yellow. In the opaque ones white prevails in the borders of the plaques as well as sometimes light pink and blue.

1 Sight, email en résille sur verre, about 1620, 14×32 mm. 2 Touch, 14×32 mm. 3 Hearing, 14×32 mm. 4 Smell, 14×32 mm.

Figures 1–18 are all enlargements.



In the rich thematical series of figural representations 29 separate themes can be distinguished, of which several are repeated many times. As already mentioned, the set has been only partially preserved and therefore a full deciphering of their iconographic programme is hardly possible. The following cycles of allegories, completely or partly preserved, are represented here:

1. “The Five Senses”, of which four are preserved: “Sight” (*fig. 1*), “Touch” (*fig. 2*), “Hearing” (*fig. 3*), and “Smell” (*fig. 4*). They are all presented as seated young women in almost identical long dresses. Their figures are seen from the side, and they differ only in attributes. They are diagonally inscribed in horizontal ovals. The plaques are 14 × 32 mm, on blue glass.

2. “The Four Cardinal Virtues” are represented by two: “Fortitudo” (*fig. 5*) and “Prudentia” (*fig. 6*). The manner of presentation of the figures, as well as their diagonal compositional principle, is very similar to the presentation of the Senses. The plaques are much larger and have a horizontal rectangular shape, measuring 26 × 85 mm (Fortitudo) and 26 × 90 mm (Prudentia), and are also executed on blue glass.

3. “The Four Continents”: the three preserved plaques (the “Asia” is lacking) are vertical rectangulars 57 × 30 mm, executed on blue glass. The personifications of the continents are female figures on pied and differ only by dresses and attributes (*figs. 7, 8 and 9*).

4. Allegories referring to the prosperity of the living: “Pax”, “Abundantia”, and “Fortuna” are repeated several times in the presented set, some of them five, seven, or even fifteen times in different colour arrangements. They are small rectangular plaques of transparent glass, red foiled. Their dimensions are 40 × 12 mm (Abundantia and Fortuna) and 16 × 12 mm (Pax). The allegory of Peace⁵ also appears in another compositional version and has the shape of an elongated oval measuring 21 × 12 mm, executed on blue glass. To the group of allegories, which are symbols of one idea, belongs also “Vanitas”, the smallest plaque of the set, a quatrefoil measuring 13 mm in diameter, made of transparent, red foiled glass.

5. The allegory of the triumph of art consists of three single representations, of which each is placed on a separate oval plaque, viz. “Minerva” (*colour plate*), the patron and at the same time symbol of the Liberal Arts, “Time” (*fig. 10*) according to the definition of Ripa, or “Eternity”, according to Cartari⁶, as well as the allegory of “Glory and Moral Victory” (*fig. 11*). These plaques are made of transparent glass and are red foiled. Their sizes vary: Minerva 27 × 75 mm, Time 30 × 61 mm, and Glory 30 × 63 mm.

6. The mythological themes are represented by four rectangular plaques with scenes from Ovid’s “Metamorphoses”: “Venus and Adonis” (*fig. 12*) which refers, as regards its composition, to the popular composition of Titian from the Prado and measures 57 × 40 mm; “The Death of Adonis” (*fig. 13*) which shows some resemblances to the picture of Virgil Solis from the illustrated edition of the Metamorphoses of 1563 and measures 55 × 40 mm; “Apollo and Daphne” (*fig. 14*), in a version nearest to the drawing of Hendrik Goltzius of about 1590⁷, size 60 × 40 mm, and finally “Bacchus and Ceres” (*fig. 15*), size 55 × 40 mm.

Among the representations of mythological themes should be included also “The Homage to Venus”, size 32 × 70 mm, although it seems to be an element of another cycle (*fig. 16*).

7. A number of rectangular plaques with hunting scenes can also be considered as belonging to a larger cycle: hunting hares, stags, and boars (*fig. 17*). They are executed on transparent red foiled glass and their sizes are respectively 13 × 41, 13 × 52 and 13 × 41 mm.

8. In order to assure a full presentation of all themes that appear in the set discussed, two genre scenes are also to be mentioned: architectural landscape with a peasant carrying a basket (*fig. 18*), and



Minerva, email en résille sur verre, about 1620, 28 × 75 mm (*slightly enlarged*).

“Greeting of a Lady by a Nobleman”. Both plaques are horizontal rectangles and are the same size 18 × 48 mm. The landscape is made on blue glass and the latter plaque is on transparent, blue foiled glass with a blue glass border.

9. Also preserved are a grotesque ornamental panneau, 68 × 12 mm, and a fragment of this composition repeated on a separate plaque measuring 40 × 12 mm, as well as a small plaque with a fruit basket, size 20 × 12 mm. They are all made of transparent red foiled glass.

Among few known enamels with figural compositions, only one theme – “Adoration of the Shepherds” – has, as yet, a precisely established source⁸. This is the dated (1623) and signed engraving by the German artist Valentin Sezenius. At least three plaques of enamels en résille sur verre repeat this composition (Wallace Collection, Victoria and Albert Museum, and Civico Museo in Pavia). A comparison of the enamels with their source shows not only a precision of design, but also a great freedom in transferring the composition, as proportions and secondary details are slightly changed in all enamels. However, in spite of these changes, the remarkable individual character of the artistic manner of Sezenius’ engraving has persisted. This gives evidence of the great technical ability, as well as of a considerable artistic sensibility and creative invention of the enameler. Such a comparison permits us, in my opinion, to assume that the sharpness of the drawing and a certain angularity of the manneristically elongated and inflected figures in the set of enamels discussed are intentional effects. An original and very characteristic manner, common to the majority of enamel compositions, would result, therefore, from the character of the graphic source, and not only from the fact that a composition was cut out in a small piece of resistant material.

The examples of figural enamels known to me show such a considerable resemblance in execution that they could pass as being made in the same workshop. This is indicated by the delicate and extremely complicated technique. This is, however, not enough for conclusions concerning the author of compositional designs. The works of Sezenius are not sufficiently known to ascribe to him the authorship of the allegorical and mythological compositions here discussed. The general resemblance results from the fact that the enamels were probably made at the same time as the “Adoration of the Shepherds”, i.e. towards 1620, and at the same mannerist centre, probably a German one, with distinct influence of the Fontainebleau



5 Fortitudo, 26×85 mm. 6 Prudentia, 26×90 mm.

School. This influence is especially visible in the panneau with allegories of Peace, Abundance, and Fortune which originate from the compositions of Etienne Delaune (1519–1583). The dating around 1620 is also confirmed by the character of the ornament in those plaques.

In the great figural compositions (scenes from *Metamorphoses* and the cycle of the Four Continents) the elongated canon of human

figures has been maintained, but in contrast to the French compositions, sharpness and flatness of the design are expressively accentuated, which gives them a distinct original plastic expression and an exceptionally decorative character. These characteristics seem to suggest that the author should be sought among the German mannerists.

The Polish graphic collections are, unfortunately, not complete enough, so that investigations have not brought the expected results. However, I am convinced that these enamels had their sources in graphic art. An artistic individuality has certainly impressed a stamp on them, but the reason of their uniformity should also be sought in the common authorship of designs. At the present stage of our knowledge I should be inclined in the first instance to suggest as possible authors those engravers who published the goldsmith patterns. Apart from Sezenius (already mentioned), Corbinus Saur (d. 1635) and the Sadeliers, Rafael (1560–1632) and Egidius II (1570–1629) deserve notice.

They all worked in the Palatinate, a region of Germany where French and Dutch influences crossed at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, forming a specific mixture with the local traditions. In this group Crispin de Passe the Elder, an extremely productive engraver, should also be included. It may be of importance that he worked in Cologne in the first years of the 17th century. In his activity a large part was taken by allegorical cycles which appear in our set of enamels. Taking into account the extent and the popularity of his activity, it must be considered possible that his prints exerted an influence upon the enamel compositions under discussion. It seems that a considerable likeness exists between his allegory of Sight⁹ and the Prudentia presented here. This composition is non-typical in the sense that, apart from the usual attributes of Prudentia (mirror and serpent around her hand), there is also an eagle, which is an attribute of the personification of Sight. The posture of the figure itself, gesture, dress, and the manner of handling the drapery are in both cases very similar.

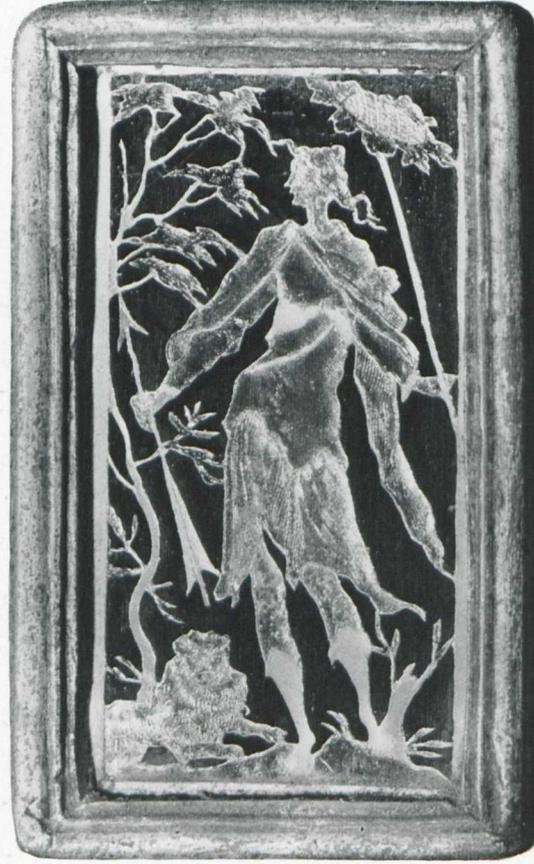
7 America, 56×30 mm.



8 Europa, 57×30 mm.



9 Africa, 57×30 mm.



I should also be inclined to see Dutch influences in the composition of the second Cardinal Virtue: Fortitudo, as well as in allegories of the Senses, which recall the graphic series engraved by Jacob de Backer (about 1560–1590)¹⁰. A Dutch origin may be discovered also in the personification of the Four Continents, for which an archetype may be found in the cycle engraved in 1581 by Johann Sadeler, after Dirck Barendsz¹¹. The cycle mentioned could not be a direct model for our enameler, as the manner of design, posture of the figures and their dresses are different. It was, however, certainly an inspiration for an artist a few decades younger, who, being influenced by the same idea, nevertheless gave it a different artistic form. I should be tempted to ascribe this transformation to Johann's nephew, Egidius Sadeler, who was specializing in goldsmith patterns. However, I cannot make such a suggestion, as I have no possibility of investigating the works of Egidius Sadeler from this point of view. It seems to me that even among the few non-allegorical compositions in the set discussed Dutch influences are noticeable. I have in mind the "Greeting of the Lady". This is one of the most interesting plaques in our set, different in its theme and style, the only one that represents a group of persons in dresses of the period. Considered as a separate composition, it has the character of a genre scene, but it could have another meaning in the set, e.g. it could be a fragment of the cycle of the Four Seasons of the Year. A similar solution of the theme of Spring appears e.g. in the graphic cycle of Hermann Brecevert, after Adrian van de Venne, published in the Hague in 1625, where persons taking part in the scene have very similar dresses¹². This enables us to confirm the date of our plaque and with it that of the whole set as about 1620, since precisely this composition, one of the few that are realistically conceived, is exceptionally clear and precise in the design of the dress. The hunters' dresses in the hunting scenes and the dress of the peasant carrying a basket are more difficult to verify, but they do not contradict their dating in the first quarter of the 17th century.

It is very difficult to compose a consistent iconographic programme from the plaques preserved. It is obvious that their content does not correspond to the sacred function of the tabernacle and has no relation to it. On the other hand, the sizes of the plaques seem to indicate that they come from a piece of furniture of small size with a secular purpose. Why precisely from a piece of furniture? The plaques of enamels en résille sur verre preserved in European collections are also, in their majority, very small (lockets, pendants, watchcases) and



10 Time – Eternity, 30×61 mm.
11 Glory and Moral Victory, 30×63 mm.

were used as jewellery. The Wallace Collection and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London also have ornamental belts¹³ composed of rectangular plaques with hunting and genre scenes, which in their character and size are similar to our plaques presented in *figs. 17–18*. This could, to all appearances, contradict my thesis about the origin of our enamels from an earlier piece of furniture. One should re-

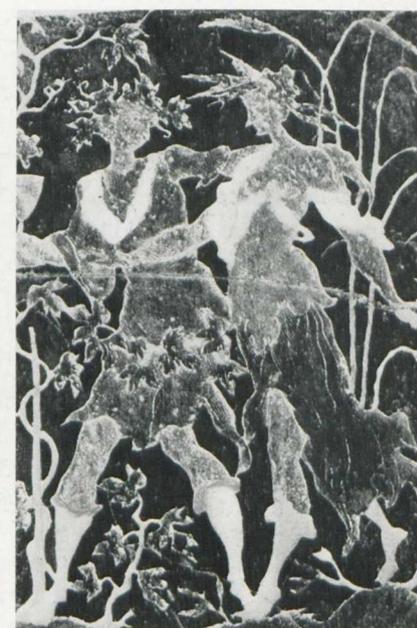
12 Venus and Adonis, 57×40 mm.

13 Death of Adonis, 55×40 mm.



14 Apollo and Daphne, 60×40 mm.

15 Bacchus and Ceres, 55×40 mm.





16 Homage to Venus, 33 × 70 mm. 17 Hunting boars, 13 × 42 mm.
18 Landscape with peasant, 18 × 48 mm.

member, however, that these plaques present illogical iconographic insertions into the allegorical and mythological programme of the set. In my opinion, the plaques presented in *figures 1–16* constituted one of the elements of a rich cabinet with a complicated iconographical programme. Cabinets of this type, of which the most famous – according to the published sources – was known as the “Pommersche Kunstschränk”¹⁴, were specific products of German mannerism. Indeed, it is even difficult to call them pieces of furniture, as they had rather the character of a very complicated structure with an extremely condensed and built up iconographical programme. In reality, they were not functional pieces of furniture but composite objects of art, and their subject-matter encompassed the whole of human activity. One cabinet of this type required the work of many artists with different specializations, among which the work of the cabinetmaker was not the most important. The view may be justified that they embodied more spirit than matter.

The production centre for cabinets of this type was Augsburg, where the above-mentioned “Pommersche Kunstschränk” was carried out in 1610–1616 by a group of 28 prominent artists and craftsmen, including such prominent painters as Johann Rottenhammer and Matthäus Kager, goldsmiths Christoph Lenker, Matthäus Wallbaum and enameler David Altenstetter. Special attention should be drawn to David Altenstetter (1537–1617). His

speciality was transparent enamels *champlevé* on sheet silver destined for the decoration of cabinets, watches, boxes, etc. Their decoration consisted, as a rule, of grotesques. The technique and themes were, it is true, different from enamels *en résille sur verre*, but their artistic character was similar owing to a contrast of glittering transparent enamels and of the white fold of polished silver. A similar purpose could also be attributed to these decorative compositions, for example, the doors of cabinets. The activity of Altenstetter developed in the same period, or only a little earlier than the time when our plaques were made. Upon comparison with his known works, he cannot be considered the author of our set, but it seems to be very probable that the enamel plaques of Altenstetter could be an inspiration for an unknown author of the works discussed here.

An assumption can therefore be ventured that the author of our enamels was affiliated with the Augsburg centre. We are led to such a conclusion in view of:

- the Northern character of the graphic sources,
- the shape of the cabinet with a composite programme of its iconography specific for Germany,
- the important position of Augsburg as a goldsmith centre, and particularly the activity of Altenstetter connected with the local production, which is close to our set as regards style and technique owing to the use of transparent enamels.

This proposal should be considered at present only a working hypothesis and a contribution to the further study of the enamels *en résille sur verre*.

¹ The tabernacle was discovered in 1968 by Mr Michael Gradowski (Historical Monuments Documentation Centre, Warsaw), to whom I owe the identification of the technique of enamel plaques used for its decoration. This article resulted from the research carried out by the author within her activity in the State Restoration Studios in Warsaw for conservation purposes. To Prof. Jan Bialostocki my best thanks are due for his advice and friendly help in the preparation of this article for publication.

² J. Evans, *A History of Jewellery 1100–1870*, London 1953, p. 140; E. Steingraber, *Antique Jewellery. Its History in Europe from 800 to 1900*, London 1957, p. 122 and, by the same author, the entry in the *Reallexikon zur Deutschen Kunstgeschichte*, vol. 5, Stuttgart 1959, col. 48; J. Labatre, *Histoire des arts industriels au Moyen Age et à l'époque de la Renaissance*, Paris 1864, vol. 2, p. 558–560. For the detailed information I wish to express my thanks to Mr. V. Normay of the Wallace Collection, and to Miss A. G. Somers Cocks of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

³ I hope, therefore, that the publication of the present material will lead to my receiving information from museums and collections which have similar enamels.

⁴ Only in the work of J. Labatre, *op. cit.*, are they categorically ascribed to the French goldsmiths, without, however, reasons for such an opinion being given. In modern literature authors are very careful as regards localization of the workshop.

⁵ E. W. Braun, *Die deutschen Renaissanceplaketten der Sammlung Alfred Ritter von Molthein*, Wien, 1918, pl. XXXII, fig. 124, and p. 54, writes about a leaden plaque with personification of Peace which has some compositional resemblances. The author is a South German monogramist H. G., about 1570.

⁶ C. Ripa, *Iconologia*, Venezia 1669, p. 185; V. Cartari, *Imagini delli dei de gl'antichi*, Venezia 1646, p. 11.

⁷ W. Stechow, *Apollo und Daphne*, Leipzig-Berlin 1932, pl. XXIX, fig. 58.

⁸ The basic article is by C. C. Oman, *A note on designs by Valentin Sezenius*, *Apollo*, vol. 6, 1927, no. 34, p. 149–150.

⁹ F. B. H. Hollstein, *Dutch and Flemish Engravings, Etchings and Woodcuts*, Amsterdam, vol. XV.

¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 52.

¹¹ *Cp. Reallexikon*, *op. cit.*, p. 1136.

¹² F. B. H. Hollstein, *op. cit.*, vol. 3, p. 196.

¹³ Wallace Collection, Reg. No. XXIII A 40; Victoria and Albert Museum Reg. No. 484–1873.

¹⁴ Description and literature are given in the catalogue of the *Kunstgewerbe Museum. Ausgewählte Werke*, Berlin 1963, cat. 117–119.

RESUME: MARYLA KALAMAJSKA-SAEED, EMAUX SUR VERRE RECEMMENT DECOUVERT EN POLOGNE (p. 126)

Nous ne connaissons que peu d'émaux sur verre figurant des personnages. Parmi les rares exemplaires qui sont parvenus jusqu'à nous il n'en est que deux qu'on puisse avec certitude rattacher à un nom. Il s'agit d'une plaquette (Victoria and Albert Museum) et d'un médaillon (Wallace Collection, Londres) représentant tous deux l'Adoration des bergers d'après une gravure de Sezenius datée de 1623.

Les émaux dont il est question dans ce travail, bien qu'offrant les mêmes particularités techniques que les précédents, ne peuvent être attribués au même artiste. Les sujets représentés sont allégoriques et mythologiques, ce qui laisse supposer que ces pièces pro-

RESUME: MARYLA KALAMAJSKA-SAEED, NEUENTDECKTE GLASEMAILS IN POLEN (S. 126)

Unter der geringen Anzahl der bis heute erhaltenen Glasemails mit figurativen Kompositionen lassen sich nur zwei Objekte mit einem bestimmten Namen verbinden; nach dem 1623 datierten Kupferstich von Valentin Sezenius wurde die Plakette mit »Anbetung der Hirten«, Victoria and Albert Museum, und das Medaillon mit identischer Komposition, Wallace Collection in London, gefertigt.

Die hier vorgestellte größere Sammlung von Emails, die in derselben Technik hergestellt wurde, zeigt eine andere Hand und kann mit dem Werk von Sezenius nicht unmittelbar in Zusammenhang gebracht werden. Die mythologisch-allegorische Thematik aller Pla-

viennent de la décoration d'un cabinet exécuté vers 1620. Selon l'auteur de l'article il se pourrait fort bien que ces émaux soient l'œuvre d'un orfèvre d'Augsbourg. Cette ville fut à l'époque un centre renommé pour ses cabinets de grande valeur caractérisés par leur programme thématique fort compliqué ainsi que par leur riche décoration en pierres précieuses. Parmi les techniques en usage il faut signaler surtout l'émail champlevé, souvent employé (par exemple David Altenstetter).

Le but de cet article serait atteint, si les nombreux exemples comparatifs, ici présentés, aidaient à retrouver les sources graphiques se rapportant à chaque pièce en particulier et à localiser et identifier l'atelier de l'émailleur.

ketten scheint darauf hinzuweisen, daß die Sammlung ursprünglich eine Dekoration eines kostbaren Kabinettschranks von circa 1620 bildete. Die Verfasserin stellt die Hypothese auf, daß der Meister im Kreis der Augsburger Goldschmiede zu suchen sei. Manieristische, kompliziert ideologische Programme und Juwelendekorationen wurden in Augsburg (z. B. von David Altenstetter) in den mehrfarbigen Emails champlevé oft verwendet.

Dieser Aufsatz wird seinen Zweck erreichen, wenn die Veröffentlichung dieses reichen Vergleichsmaterials helfen würde, die graphischen Vorlagen zu den einzelnen Kompositionen zu finden und die Identifizierung oder Lokalisierung der bestimmten Emailleurwerkstatt zu ermöglichen.