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The Christian Art of Lithuania: An Exhibition in the Lithuanian Museum of Art Vilnius 2000–2003

The long anticipated exhibition “Krikščionybė Lietuvos mene” (The Christian Art of Lithuania) was opened on 28 December 1999 in the presence of the President and the supreme state and Church dignitaries. The display was featured in two storeys of the Vilnius Arsenal, the seat of Lietuvos Dailes Muziejus (the Lithuanian Museum of Art). Beautifully published leaflets announced an exhibit of the resources of goldsmithery from the treasury of Vilnius cathedral, and in this respect the visitors should not feel disappointed. A specially protected interior displayed an excellent, large group of liturgical vessels and equipment, which, *nota bene*, originated not only from the cathedral treasury, but also from other churches, both in Vilnius and outside the capital. The exhibition has met with understandable interest on the part of the wide public. It is admired by veritable crowds, presented with an opportunity for admiring numerous valuable objects, but offered embarrassingly insufficient information about the available works of art. The absence of a catalogue cannot be replaced by folders with attractive photographs by Antanas Lukšenas and a very general text by the director of the Museum, containing a considerable number of errors in the descriptions of the few discussed objects. A review of such an extensive exhibition, composed of variegated thematic sections, is an onerous task, but owing to the fact that we are dealing with an important event it seems worthwhile to make the effort. The exhibition constitutes not merely an artistic phenomenon, but is also encumbered with essential cognitive tasks not only from the viewpoint of aesthetics, but also of science and even politics. It should be recalled that the featured exhibits from the cathedral treasury have never been subjected to specialist studies and, as a result, have not become part of social awareness. Limited literature has concentrated on up to twenty select and barely mentioned examples¹. The majority has remained unknown, also for non-scientific reasons. In September 1939, the cathedral silver, previously rather unwillingly shown to laymen, was walled up in the church crypts. The concealment of the treasury was highly justified, and its

¹ W. Zahorski, *Katedra wileńska* (Vilnius Cathedral), Wilno 1904; J. Kurczewski, *Kościół zamkowy czyli Katedra Wileńska w jej dziejowym, liturgicznym, architektonicznym i ekonomicznym rozwoju* (The Castle Church, or Vilnius Cathedral and Its Historical, Liturgical, Architectural and Economic Development), vol. 1–3, Wilno 1908–1916; M. Sokółowski, *Dwa gotyckie style, wileński i krakowski, w architekturze i złotnictwie i źródła ich znamion charakterystycznych* (Two Gothic Styles, Vilnius and Cracow, in Architecture and Goldsmithery and the Sources of Their Characteristic Features), *Sprawozdania Komisji Historii Sztuki* 8, 1912; A. Bochnak, J. Pagaczewski, *Polskie rzemiosło artystyczne wieków średnich* (Polish Artistic Crafts during the Middle Ages), Kraków 1959.

purpose was protection against plunder by two aggressors — the Germans, encroaching from the west, and the Russians, who on 17 September 1939 attacked Poland from the east and soon occupied Vilnius. The subsequent turbulent history of the town did not favour the unearthing of the hidden valuables. In the new post-1945 political conditions, when the Archbishop of Vilnius and the majority of Polish clergy were forced to leave Vilnius, the cathedral silver remained, for reasons unknown, in its apparently safe hideaway. In 1953, the cathedral was closed and adapted for a gallery of the Dajles Muzejus as well as a temporary storehouse of collections of paintings. In 1985, a sensational, although secret, discovery was made during construction work conducted for the purpose of installing air conditioning. The opening of the crypts led to the disclosure of the treasure, which since then has been kept in the Dajles Muzejus. Its most attractive part is featured for the first time upon the occasion of the discussed exhibition. The greater the astonishment, therefore, that in the course of the past fifteen years such an invaluable collection has not been properly prepared for presentation.

One of the most valuable treasures of Vilnius cathedral — the reliquary of its patron, St. Stanislaus the bishop — is not shown, but since in the folder it occupies foremost place I shall devote more attention to it, especially considering that the dating and attributions are simply astonishing. There have been so many publications dealing with reliquaries in the form of an arm that nothing can justify dating the Vilnius example as fourteenth century nor the unclear location of its workshop somewhere in Central Europe². It is well known from the documented history of the Vilnius' cathedral that upon its erection in 1387 by King Ladislaus Jagiełło it received a gift from Cracow in the form of the relics of St. Stanislaus. The information contained in the folder makes no mention of this fact, although the latter obviously comprised the sole foundation for dating the reliquary. Even if we ignore the lightheartedness with which the proposed date encompasses the entire fourteenth century, it was proposed in obvious contradiction with stylistic features (which indicate at least the sixteenth century) and without any consideration of the individual traits of the exhibit itself. Even the illustration shows that the object in question displays goldsmith's signs, well-known from the publication by Leonard Lepszy, who recognised the sign with the likeness of St. Eligius as the one applied by the Vilnius goldsmiths' guild³. One might discuss whether such an assumption is correct, but the neglect to provide information about the existence of goldsmith's signs simply cannot be justified. Even more curious is the statement claiming that the Late Gothic virtuoso decoration of the socle is the work of an eighteenth-century Vilnius goldsmith. It is truly difficult to comprehend how a single brief explanatory note

² *Kriekščionybė Lietuvos mene. Lietuvos Dailės Muzejus*, Vilnius 1999 — an exhibition folder, text prep. by R. Budrys, descriptions of photograph, no. 1; K. Szczepkowska-Naliwajek, *Relikwiarze średniowiecznej Europy* (Reliquaries in Mediaeval Europe), Warszawa 1996, pp. 203–5, ill. 67–70; in Poland there are eleven such reliquaries, the oldest (ill. 70), from the end of the fourteenth century, is ascribed to a Cracow workshop and featured in Wrocław cathedral; traditionally (confirmed by an inscription from 1584) it was donated by Queen Jadwiga.

³ L. Lepszy, *Przemysł złotniczy w Polsce* (The Goldsmithery Industry in Poland), Kraków 1933, p. 327, items 323, 324 and 325.

could contain such a condensed number of errors. A historian of art may only lament the fact that they pertain to a historical monument of high artistic value, which deserves to be discussed in a meticulous and thorough study. Let us hope that the exceptional sacral rank of the object, which cannot be perceived as a mere example of the art of goldsmithery, will be taken into account. The reliquary is a carrier of more profound values, which means that in this case the contents possess prime importance. Finally, it is necessary to examine both the spiritual and material aspects while considering historical facts occurring at the time of origin. Today, the Lithuanians and the Poles can differ in evaluations of the period of the joint history of their countries, but this approach will not change facts or the ensuing consequences. The former include the St. Stanislaus reliquary, created in certain conditions, which should be recognised without seeking refuge in naive steps. Unless one explains the reason why Vilnius cathedral received the patronimum of the Polish saint and patron of the Crown, all kinds of equilibristic and the unnecessary aging of the reliquary will prove useless. Reliquaries could be granted only in Cracow, and they were offered by a joint monarch at a concrete stage of the fourteenth century — more exactly in 1387, the time of the baptism of Lithuania and the erection of the first bishopric and its cathedral church. It seems difficult to doubt that the royal gift was devoid of a suitable setting, but this is not say that the reliquary in question has to be precisely the one which had survived up to today⁴. A reliable opinion will become possible only after the object is entrusted to researchers, who will have to devote much attention to it. Before this takes place, we must be satisfied with the retention of such an extremely valuable relic, and hope that with time it will be accompanied by a study worthy of its importance and meeting all scientific demands.

This postulate pertains to all the objects which we had an opportunity to see at the discussed exhibition; the ensuing impression is that of a hurriedly prepared display of a large number of valuable, but insufficiently identified items. Other faults include the distinct bias with which information concerning provenance is treated. I have in mind the total obliteration of all traces of cultural links with Poland. This absence of scientific objectivity exerted an impact on the whole historical stratum, generally resulting in a considerable impoverishment of the information offered to the public, and at times generating effects ridiculously contrary to the intended ones. Apart from the harmfulness of such an attitude, it is simply a shortsighted form of activity, since it would be difficult to believe that in an era of open frontiers assorted manipulations of this type could remain unnoticed. It is a great pity that the organisers lacked the willingness to co-operate with Polish scientists, making it possible to omit many unnecessary errors, which I am compelled to enumerate although I would have preferred to discuss the beauty and various qualities of the displayed works of art.

⁴ Excellent comparative material is the reliquary from Wrocław cathedral mentioned in note 2 — see also *Katalog Zabytków Sztuki w Polsce* (Catalogue of Monuments of Art in Poland), vol. 11, fasc. 18: *Włocławek i okolice* (Włocławek and the Environs), Warszawa 1988, p. XXX and 39, fig. 469.

Before I embark upon an overview of the exhibition, I would like to return once again to the text of the folder, containing an astounding number and type of errors. According to its author, a Gothic–Renaissance chalice which in 1536 a certain Albert Novikampianis, professor at Cracow Academy, received from John Zapolya, the king of Hungary, and in 1559 offered to Vilnius cathedral, originated in some mysterious Central European land. In this case, it would have sufficed to resort to *Encyklopedia Kościelna* in order to identify the donator with Wojciech Nowopolski (d. 1558), a Bible expert and a famous theologian–polemicist⁵. The fact that he was a Pole does not reduce the value of the chalice, just as the Vilnius chapter is not harmed by proof of lively contacts with the Cracow milieu. Neglect to mention the existence and intensity of such relations is useless, and in this concrete instance it became the reason for an essential restriction of information about the stylistic and workshop features of the chalice. The examination lacked a wider context, which influenced the general nature of the description of the object, caused by omitting the most essential identification element (i. e. the type of decoration). The latter constitutes an excellent example of so-called Hungarian enamel, a technique which in the mid–sixteenth century was extremely popular among artifacts produced by Cracow goldsmiths. King John Zapolya — the brother-in-law and son-in-law of King Sigismund the Old — stayed in Cracow upon a number of occasions, when he could have ordered precisely such a gift. In turn, Rev.

Nowosielski spent the years 1555–1557 at the Hungarian court as a tutor of Prince John Sigismund Zapolya. It would be worthwhile to see whether the date of the offering of the chalice had been deciphered correctly, since in this context the year 1556 would have been much more probable than the proposed 1536. Although it is not easy to decide whether the discussed chalice was made in Hungary or in Poland, only those two countries can be taken into consideration owing to the fact that the expression “Central–Europe” can be regarded as evidence of insufficient knowledge or manipulation.

A chalice founded in 1624 by Marcin Szulc–Wolfowicz, a canon of Vilnius, was identified as an Augsburg product exclusively upon the basis of the inscription, although the absence of goldsmith’s signs, obligatory at the time in this renowned centre, indicates greater caution. On the other hand, a chalice founded by Bishop Nicholas Stephen Pac, marked with the municipal sign of Augsburg and the initials of the goldsmith — B. S., quite possibly Balthasar Salis (active in 1675–1694)⁶ — has been described extremely cautiously as a West European object. The Rococo monstrance decorated with enamel is dated as seventeenth-century, and unhesitatingly ascribed to the extraordinary or, one might say, avantgarde foundation of the founder — Hetman Wincenty Gosiewski, murdered in 1662.

⁵ M. Nowodworski, *Encyklopedia Kościelna* (The Church Encyclopaedia), vol. 16, Warszawa 1885, pp. 476–477; in more recent literature a copious entry in *Słownik polskich teologów katolickich* (Dictionary of Polish Catholic Theologians), ed. by E. Wyczawski, vol. 3, Warszawa 1982, pp. 233–234.

⁶ H. Seling, *Die Kunst der Augsburger Goldschmiede 1529–1868. Meister. Marken. Werke*, vol. 3, München 1980.

Such cardinal mistakes do not recur in the explanations displayed in the showcases, but here information is presented in an extremely concise manner, and even if the goldsmith's sign can be seen distinctly, his name is not given, as in the instance of the two Gdańsk chalices presented in showcase no. 5 — the Baroque one, with the coat of arms of the sub-Chancellor of Lithuania, Casimir Leo Sapieha, was made after 1643 by the famous *Andreas Mackensen the Older*, and the Rococo one by the equally celebrated *Johann Gottfried Schlaubitz*. Seventeenth-century Baroque ampullae, standing on a plated tray produced during the inter-war period by the Vilnius-based firm of Michał Niewiadomski, have obviously been "contaminated" by the tray since they too have been dated as nineteenth-century. A similar rejuvenation was experienced by a Renaissance altar cross founded by Abraham Wojna (Bishop of Vilnius in 1631–1649), bearing a plaquette with his coat of arms and initials, but presented as an object from the middle of the eighteenth century.

The celebrated monstrance, founded in 1535 by Olbracht Gasztołd, the Chancellor of Lithuania, embellished with five shields displaying four of his coats of arms, is featured especially effectively. It remains an unsolved mystery why the coat of arms of the paternal grandmother (Kieżgajło) received a strange form which recalls more the Prawdzic than the Zadora coat of arms, shown on the chancellor's tombstone originating from the same period⁷. The monstrance, which up to now has been regarded as a work produced in a Cracow workshop⁸, is ascribed to an unidentified Lithuanian goldsmith. Quite possibly, there exists a number of premises justifying such a change of attribution, but it would be worthwhile to present them in order to embark, in the light of new data, upon an attempt at solving the goldsmith's sign, whose drawing was published by L. Lepszy⁹. This example once again makes us aware of the great loss caused to the progress of knowledge by the decision to present such a prominent exhibition without a catalogue.

As has been mentioned, the exhibition includes objects originating not only from the cathedral. Consequently, the above discussed monstrance was given an extremely interesting pendant of an equally significant form, i. e. a tower-type monstrance from the Bernardine church in Vilnius, up to now regarded as lost, but apparently preserved in the local church of the Holy Ghost. This monstrance too has been considered by pertinent literature to be a product of Cracow¹⁰. Nowhere, however, was it mentioned that although thickly gilded, it is made of brass. Such information is also missing from the exhibition, although the definition of material is extremely important in the case of goldsmithery. The type of used material influences the technique of production and, as a consequence, the form of the object. In the case of the Bernardine monstrance,

⁷ In the opinion of all historians the chancellor's grandmother was Kieżgajłówna of the Zadora (Płomieńczyk) coat of arms — cf. K. Pietkiewicz, *Kieżgajłowie i ich latyfundium do połowy XVI wieku* (The Kieżgajło Family and Its Latyfundium to the Mid-sixteenth Century), Poznań 1982.

⁸ A. Bochnak, J. Pagaczewski, *op. cit.*, pp. 120–22.

⁹ L. Lepszy, *op. cit.*, p. 327, item 326.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 123–4.

when pliable silver was replaced by hard brass, the forms of the cast were rendered thicker and slightly cruder. This technique explains the difference of artistic expression, discernible between the sophisticated monstrance founded by Gasztold and the very effective but much less refined Bernardine counterpart, which probably for these reasons Bochnak and Pagaczewski recognised to be later (first half of the seventeenth century)¹¹. The authors of the exhibition were of a different opinion, but limited themselves to a very general definition of the time of origin as the sixteenth century. Both objects have remained inaccessible to scholars for the past sixty years and, obviously, demand to be studied anew. Such an approach is even more necessary in the case of the numerously represented, but up to now never before published remaining silverware, which contains extremely high quality works, such as the minuscule and extraordinarily beautiful Late Renaissance Italian reliquary of St. Magdalene dei Pazzi, undoubtedly a gift by one of the representatives of the Pac family, which claimed to be related to the saint. Features of Italian Baroque goldsmithery can be perceived in an enamel decorated monstrance founded by Bishop George Tyszkiewicz (d. in 1656, a suffragan in 1627–1633 and a Vilnius bishop ordinary from 1649); this is one of the two exhibits distinct due to a *reservaculum* in the form of a heart and a figural shaft (the second comes from Augsburg). A splendid Early Baroque pyx from the first half of the seventeenth century, originating from the church of St. John, has a cover embellished with a miniature gloriotta containing a figurine of St. Jacob. A mother of pearl crucifix (a souvenir from a pilgrimage to the Holy Land) bears a Jerusalem cross placed at the base (perhaps this was a gift offered by Nicholas Christopher Radziwiłł “Sierotka” or his companion Andrew Skorulski, the marshal of Kowno). I have mentioned only several examples, although the actual list is extremely long. A number of exhibits includes goldsmithery works from various centres, frequently with the signatures of the artists. The subsequent task calls for deciphering the inscriptions and the code of arms of the donators as well as a thorough examination and documentation of the history of particular objects. After all, the collection constitutes not only visible proof of the rank of the cathedral, but also should provide evidence of the artistic culture of the elites in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. This important undertaking calls for a considerable input of labour and the employment of a suitable number of specialists, whose ranks in Lithuania are obviously much too small for the outcome of their work to be adequate *vis a vis* the existing needs. The latter are extensive, since they concern the composite cultural legacy bequeathed by the former Commonwealth to various nations in this part of Europe. A division according to ethnic criteria is not only deprived of all sense, but can even prove objectively harmful. It is high time to initiate joint research on the identification of all the products of the former Commonwealth.

The consequence of enclosing oneself within a small milieu very frequently leads to errors resulting from insufficient familiarity and the lack of suitably copious

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 124.

comparative material, indispensable for appropriate identification. In this manner, the Baroque statue of St. Sigismund (?), a particularly valuable example of wooden sculpture from the first half of the eighteenth century, damaged by consecutive fires of Vilnius (1748 and 1749), was dated as sixteenth-century. Just as unjustified is the excessively facile reference to great names, which we encounter in the case of West European paintings (or copies). By way of example, *Lamentation* is categorically, although quite baselessly, described as a canvas by the eminent Italian Mannerist Marcello Venusti, while in reality it is an enlarged copy of the original featured in the Roman Galeria Borghese¹².

As a rule, the exhibition observes the principle of keeping the objects anonymous. The treasury constitutes the heart of the show, and obviously the prime magnet for the public, although "at the same time" we may admire extensive collections of liturgical vestments and cathedral tapestries. The visitor, however, will not find out that in 1931 a group of tapestries was saved from being sold abroad thanks to a campaign initiated by Stanisław Lorentz, at the time a conservator of historical monuments in the then voivodeship of Vilnius¹³. The quasi-catalogue brochure recalls only "the occupation by the Russian Empire and Poland"¹⁴. With the exception of several pieces of furniture and a rather small collection of paintings and sculptures, we come across a large section dealing with folk art. These objects were not specially prepared for the exhibition, because a major part is featured in the permanent exhibition at the Dajles Muziejus or was displayed in 1998–2000 at a show entitled "The Art of Lithuanian Cloisters", organised by the same museum¹⁵. Now, however, they have been regrouped and presented in a new arrangement, which potentially offered a chance to demonstrate their obstinately ignored provenance. Upon entering the showroom, the visitor "stumbles on" a magnificent Rococo credence from the sacristy of the church of St. John, but quite unaware of this he will walk on without being informed that during the second half of the eighteenth century Vilnius comprised an extremely interesting centre of artistic furniture production, which mastered the effective art of intarsio. The only information of a, generally speaking, topographic nature concerns the division of the monuments into those originating from the Vilnius and the Samogitian dioceses, illustrated also by select portraits of bishops; these likenesses constitute as if interludes in a rather overlong and tiresome presentation of liturgical vestments. None of the sets

¹² Oil on board 56 x 40 cm. — cf. J. Ruszczycówna, *Obraz Oplakiwania z kolegiaty w Pułtusk* (The Lamentation from the collegiate church in Pułtusk), "Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie" 8 (1964), p. 149, ill. 12.

¹³ M. Morelowski, *Gobeliny wileńskie. Ich pochodzenie, wartość i losy* (The Vilnius Tapestries. Their Origin, Value and Fate), Wilno 1933, especially part 2: *Obrona gobelinów wileńskich. Fakty — Dokumenty — Głosy prasy* (Protection of the Vilnius tapestries. Facts — documents — press opinions).

¹⁴ *Krikščionybė Lietuvos mene. Lietuvos Dailes Muziejus — Lietuvos Tūkstanmečio Programos Paroda*, Vilnius 1999 m. gruodžio 28 d. — 2003 m. spalio 30 d., p. 26 — the author of this stylistic-political curio is Romualdas Budrys, the director of the Dailes Muziejus.

¹⁵ The exhibition, organised within a programme sponsored by the European Council, was accompanied by a carefully edited catalogue: *Lietuvos vienuolyno daile / The Art of Lithuanian Cloisters Vilnius 1998–2000*, Vilnius 1998.

of chasubles, copes and dalmatics is accompanied by information about their place of origin, although all of them were translated to the Dailes Muziejus from Vilnius churches closed at the time of the Soviet atheism campaign. It seems worth mentioning that the displayed valuable paraments from the cathedral sacristy have been not only recorded, but also reproduced in the so far only monographic studies about the cathedral¹⁶, making it possible to offer wider information. Deprived of descriptions of the coats of arms and the names of the founders, they have been reduced to the role of anonymous museum exhibits, and thus robbed of the character of valuable historical souvenirs. Finally, it seems worth drawing attention to the fact that seeking refuge in laconic data does not protect against mistakes, but outright provokes them, a vivid example being a crimson vestment with the Pac coat of arms, briefly described as "Lithuania, sixteenth century". If an attempt had been made to define the person of the founder, this mistaken time of origin would have been avoided, and consideration for historical facts would have protected the organisers of the exhibition from the ridiculous illusion that such fabric could have been a sixteenth-century Lithuanian product. Actually, it is Baroque Italian brocade from the second quarter of the seventeenth century, identical to the one used for the chasubles offered by Queen Cecylia Renata (d. 1644) to the Warsaw Camaldolite church¹⁷.

The left-hand side of the showroom contains the brilliantly rich (although not sophisticated) golden embroidery of chasubles as well as two embroidered antependia from the church of St. Peter and Paul, beautiful Lyons silk from the eighteenth century, as well as chasubles made out of silk belts (although they do not include the most famous belts from the Sluck manufacture).

The right-hand side of the room features historical monuments from the Samogitian diocese, although their selection gives rise to astonishment combined with certain distaste, since this part of the exhibition produces the impression as if a poor relation had been kindly permitted to show his threadbare treasures. The visitors comes across rather average chasubles of the sort found in every village church, and will not find any rich golden embroidery, although he will certainly see crudely coloured embroidery thread and cheap glass beads. Samogitia appears very simple in comparison with lavish Vilnius. Exaggeration, however, usually produces effects contrary to the intended ones, and in this unplanned manner it revealed a certain truth about the reason for the demonstrated inequality — Catholic Samogitia did not allow itself to be deprived of that which was intended for praising God; here, the true treasures of Lithuanian Christian art (*vide* the title of the exhibition) remained where they should be, in other words, in the local churches, while removed from the plundered churches of Vilnius they turned into an anonymous mass of museum resources, insufficiently or never studied. By way of comfort, several items from the left-hand side of the showroom were added, such

¹⁶ J. Kurczewski, *op. cit.*; W. Zahorski, *op. cit.*

¹⁷ At present in the collections of the Archdiocesan Museum in Warsaw, cf. the catalogue of the exhibition *Varsavia Sacra*, Warszawa 1996, p. 270, items 13 and 14, ill., pp. 206–208.

as anonymous embroidery from a church of the Vilnius Benedictine nuns (discovered in 1986 in a walled up corridor leading to the choir, where it had been concealed together with the silver and a book collection belonging to the nuns, ejected in 1948) and several pewter candlesticks, placed in such a way so that the visitor could not see the Polish foundation inscriptions, but which anyhow are obviously the former property of the church of St. John in Vilnius.

The intention of the exhibition was to present the art of Christian Lithuania; thus the display was not restricted to historical monuments from Catholic churches. This otherwise correct assumption, however, produced a superficial effect deforming actual proportions. The existence of the Eastern rite Church is marked by only three Uniate icons (although this does not follow from the offered information) despite the fact that its faithful constituted the majority of the population of the Grand Duchy. There is no explanation why one of the icons has been identified as the work of a Belorussian artist while the remaining two are considered to be Lithuanian. One has the unpleasant impression that the reason for the paucity of this section of the exhibition lies elsewhere, since in contrast to older icons mass-scale Moscow production from the turn of the nineteenth century is represented excessively, and in an overbearing manner recalls the Russianisation campaign. The didactic impact of an exhibition thus designed serves rather the cultivation of resentments than the transmission of objective historical truth. It is impossible to negate the dimensions of the losses suffered by Church art as a result of the religious policy consistently conducted by Russia since 1839, the cassation of the Union and the obliteration of its material consequences. On the other hand, it is difficult to believe that it was impossible to document better the significant position held from the very beginnings of Christianity in Lithuania by the Eastern rite Church. This fact is even more surprising in view of the interesting presentation of the Protestant creeds, whose attitude towards sacral art was more moderate; hence the much smaller number of shown material. Nonetheless, the exhibition created an opportunity for seeing a splendid copy of the Brześć Bible, a number of liturgical vessels, and the recently conserved pewter sarcophagus of Elisabeth Radziwiłł (d. 1626) from the church in Kiejdany. The latter is an exceptional object of extraordinary artistic value, distinct for the care with which it was prepared for the exhibition. The sarcophagus is accompanied by exhaustive professional commentary, a fact which should be emphasised with even greater appreciation since it is the only instance of such an approach.

It is fortunate that the exhibition, which simply must be seen, has been held. I heartily recommend that the visitor not limit himself to only a single occasion, and sincerely hope that the exhibition will also become a chance for international co-operation intent on leaving behind a more permanent trace of the event, in the form of a complete scientific catalogue.