



# Conservation and restoration treatments on the mobile inventory of the Church of Saint Nicholas, Mikluševci- reconstructions/copies

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## GENERAL INFORMATION

This project concerns the mobile inventory of the Church of Saint Nicholas in Mikluševci, near Vukovar, in Eastern Croatia, and encompasses the following objects:

- twenty venerating icons of similar size – H 23-29 cm, W 20-22 cm, D 2 cm; tempera on panel;
- four ripidas, H 194 x W 47 x D 7 cm; tempera on wood, with gilding, and an upper layer of bronzine;
- crucifix, H 223 x W 32 x D 7 cm, tempera on wood, with gilding, and upper layer of bronzine.

The author of the works is unknown, and all objects are dated in the 18<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. The inventory is stored in the parochial house located next to the church

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**Supervision:** Conservation Department in Vukovar, Croatia  
**Cultural heritage registry number:** R-98 (1978.)

**Head of project:** Full Professor Tamara Ukrainčik MA

**Associates:** Assistant Professor Barbara Horvat Kavazović MA and Assistant Professor Maja Sučević Miklin MA

**Team members:** Iva Galijan, Matea Primožić, Kali Radoljović, Antun Škrlec, 4<sup>th</sup> year students, Department of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art, Academy of Fine Arts, Zagreb (Picture 20)

**Estimated end of project:** 2023

## INTRODUCTION

Twenty venerating icons by unknown authors were painted in tempera on a wooden board in the second half of the 19th century. Inventory works have been carried out since 2020. Due to the high percentage of icon damage, the work carried out is aimed at preserving the original layers (gluing, dissection, consolidation). After cleaning, reintegration will be made in the carrier layer (closing the wormhole damage). Where the ground and paint layers are missing, there will be no intervention, and the paint layer will be reconstructed (retouched) only where there is original ground (Pictures 1-8).

## SHORT ART HISTORICAL REVIEW

The Eastern orthodox church in Mikluševci, dedicated to St. Nicholas of Myra was built in 1758-1762. Before its construction, the settlement had 31 worshiping houses, and a wooden church. A century later, the Greek Orthodox Rusyns started settling here and eventually became the dominant population. The entire inventory of St. Nicholas' church represents a quality opus of orthodox sacral art, typical for the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when it starts to flourish after the Austro-Turkish wars. It's characterized by baroque influences of Western Europe, entangled with East-Byzantine and Russian elements, but without any periodic determinant. This is commonly seen on other such objects in Slavonia.

The documentation from 1990 lists that the inventory consists of an elaborate iconostasis, venerating icons, candle holders and ripidas. According to paroch Branišlav Polimac, the iconostasis is located in Novi Sad since the recent war.

## RECONSTRUCTIONS/ COPIES

Making a copy in the service of the restoration practice is a way of presenting the painting's original state, before they were damaged, so that the original colours and the composition can be recognizable. Also, the process of making a copy will be very beneficial to the students since they will learn the traditional way of icon painting and how phases of coping (visual, technological and technical) can serve as a good practical work in future restoration. All icons will be virtually reconstructed, and some of them will be "materialized" according to the results of the analysis, and in accordance with the technology, available materials and capabilities. This poster illustrates conservation treatments of four icons and the process of making their reconstructions. The process of copying began with historical and religious research of the depicted scenes. Making reconstructions is demanding, but extremely useful for students, because they learn to master traditional techniques, but also with computer tools. The boards are impregnated in the classic way, the traditional base is applied, and then a transfer of drawing is made. The egg tempera with which the icons are painted will be replaced by *Fine Maimeri* tempera on the reconstructions (Pictures 9-19).



Picture 1 St. Demetrius, before treatments



Picture 2 St. Nicolaus, before treatments



Picture 3 St. John the Baptist, before tr.



Picture 4 St. Peter and st. Paul, before tr.



Picture 5 St. Demetrius, during treatments



Picture 6 St. Nicolaus, during treatments



Picture 7 St. John the Baptist during tr.



Picture 8 St. Peter and st. Paul. during tr.



Picture 9 St. Demetrius, reconstruction



Picture 10 St. Nicolaus, reconstruction



Picture 11 St. John the Baptist, reconstruction



Pict 12 St. Peter and st. Paul, reconstruction



Picture 13 Carpentry work on wooden panel



Picture 14 The back of the reconstruction



Picture 15 Transfer drawing via tracing paper



Picture 16 Initial drawing on prepared panel



Picture 17 Making of digital reconstruction



Picture 18 Making of reconstruction



Picture 19 Making of reconstruction



Picture 20 Students during the making of reconstructions

## PRESENTATION OF ICONS/ CONCLUSION

How to present incomplete, badly damaged works of art to the public? Does the restoration work restore value and authenticity? Standard restoration methods are often criticized, due to the development of scientific methods, technologies and the profession in general, especially since the 1950s. Performances of reconstructions in restoration practice are not unknown, it is a way of exposing the art objects, without interfering with and intervening in the original layers. Reconstructions replace the artifact, providing a new view of the icons. After the works (scheduled for 2023), the icons and reconstructions, together with other elements of the movable inventory of the church of St. Father Nicholas, will be stored in the Museum of the Serbian Orthodox Church (in the making) in Vukovar.

### Sources:

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