

## **Abstrakt disertační práce v anglickém jazyce**

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MONASTIC RULES AND MUSES. THE CAPUCHIN FRIARS IN THE SERVICE OF THE ART IN EARLY  
BAROQUE BOHEMIA

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Dissertation entitled *Monastic rules and muses. The capuchin friars in the service of the art in early Baroque Bohemia* set out for the purpose of research to the neglected theme of the Capuchin brothers – painters on the border between Mannerism and the Baroque era. This phenomenon in painting, which is not only characteristic for the order of the Capuchins, but also of other ecclesiastical orders, has never been more comprehensive.

The Capuchin brother Paolo Piazza came to the Czech lands with first capuchin brothers; in his paintings he is inspired of the Venetian school of the 16th century. He was a versatile painter, he created not only painting on canvases, but also made wall paintings and his painting manuscript was not uniformly defined. Paolo Piazza worked in the capuchin monasteries in Prague and Brno during the reign of Rudolph II, for the emperor himself he created several artworks. Piazza's work has also been preserved in the engravings of the Sadeler family. Thanks to these engravings, several Piazza's compositions with a set iconographic type have spread to European fine arts.

From the period of the Czech Baroque there are also records of several dozen painters coming from the ranks of the Capuchin Order. They participated mainly in the decoration of monasteries and adjacent churches.

Paola Piazza's stay in the Czech lands during the reign of Emperor Rudolf II was a premeditated act of the Capuchin order. In Prague, the mission of the newly established Capuchin order was to participate in the renewal of Catholic life according to the regulations of the Council of Trent. During his activities in Central Europe, Paolo Piazza, also known by his religious name fr. Cosma da Castelfranco, had the task to create painting decorations for emerging Capuchin monasteries and churches. During Paolo Piazza's stay in the Czech lands, two monasteries of Capuchin brothers were established: at Prague's Hradčany and a few years

later also in Moravia in Brno. Only a few works originating from Piazza's activities in Bohemia and Moravia were signed by him or later ascribed to him by archival documentation.

Paolo Piazza's Venetian training guides his entire life's work. Piazza's paintings that originated in the Czech lands also show the Venetian painting tradition and obvious inspiration by Venetian masters of the 16th century, such as Titian, Paolo Veronese, Palma il Giovane and Jacopo Tintoretto.

The Capuchin order was indeed inclined to fine arts but did not indulge in sumptuous decoration. This was customary also in other mendicant orders as their monastic rules ordered simplicity and poverty. A remarkable phenomenon in the context of the relationship between the Capuchins and art is the theme of Capuchin brothers who were also active painters. These art activities of religious brothers were not limited to Italy. As evidenced by archival sources, they were a common practice also in Czech Capuchin monasteries. In Prague's Capuchin church of Our Lady of the Angels, Paolo Piazza created two works, which have been preserved to this day. It is the previously known main altarpiece *Vision of St. Francis in Portiuncula chapel and playing angels*, which was created around 1602, and the recently rediscovered ceiling paintings with Marian iconography, coming also from that period.

Some models for the main altar painting have already been identified. This study seeks to add other possible sources of inspiration, especially from the Venetian environment. Moreover, it improves the current the state of knowledge by revealing later overpainting that arose in the late 18th century at the hands of another Capuchin brother artist, Oliver Steigerle. He renovated Piazza's painting but also tried to unify the image with later Baroque side altars. The original paintings were unearthed by restorers in the 1980s.

Along with the high altar, a ceiling decoration was created in the church vault depicting scenes of the *Annunciation of Virgin Mary*, *Assumption* and *Coronation of the Virgin Mary*. Until recently, its attribution was not solved, but on the basis of their formal characteristics and the repeated motifs and quotations, these paintings by the *al secco* technique are now also attributed to Paolo Piazza, who was not only a painter of canvases but also a skilled painter of murals and ceiling paintings. The rare paintings were covered under layers of lime for long periods of time and were not revealed until restoration works by Jan Pasálek between 1978 and 1982. The painting, however, was largely destroyed; its original vivid colors are best evidenced by the scene of the Annunciation. An identical angel of the Annunciation was later used by Piazza in the church of Sta. Maria Aquiro in Rome. Other formal characteristics and

brushwork also suggest Paolo Piazza as the painter. These three fields with ceiling paintings were originally accompanied by ornamental decoration, which survived only in fragments, and therefore, it was covered again by the restorers.

Other works attributed to Paolo Piazza are part of the painting cycle *Martyrdom of St. Apostles and the Lord's Crucifixion* of Strahov Monastery. The obvious model for these apostolic histories is the graphic cycle by Julius Goltzius, adapted by the painter Maerten Vos. With his own original approach, the painter recasts the engravings models and uses glazes and volumes to create characteristic colors. However, Piazza's authorship is not clearly demonstrated.

The image *Christ and the adulterous woman* from the depository of the National Gallery in Prague, which was originally located in the collection of Franz Antonín Berka z Dubé, indicates Piazza's style. The image is now attributed to Palma il Giovane, but it does not manifest Palma's level of artistic skills; therefore, it may have been authored by one of his pupils. Some scholars see it as a work by Pietro Malombra. The painting is remarkable not only for its inspiration by the work of the Venetian painters Veronese and Tintoretto, but also because of the glasses that sit on the nose of one of the scribes. A very similar male character with glasses appears in other Piazza's paintings. It is interesting to observe in which contexts glasses appear in Piazza's images and how the history of Venice is connected with glasses.

This work also maps the relationship of Paola Piazza with Emperor Rudolf II and his artistic court. The emperor was rather disinclined towards the Capuchin order, and not long after the arrival of the Capuchins in Prague, he even sought their expulsion from the city. As evidenced by monastic chronicles, this disharmony was resolved thanks to the artistic talent of brother Cosmas - Paola Piazza. A record exists in the Capuchin monastery annals that thanks to a painting depicting the *Adoration of the Magi*, which was made by the hands of the Capuchin Fra Cosma da Castelfranco for the emperor to achieve reconciliation, the relationship between Rudolf II. and the Capuchins turned for the better. This is an important proof of the fact that br. Cosma was highly respected by the other brothers and that his talent for painting allowed them to find a suitable solution to the dispute, as the emperor was known to be a great lover of the arts. Later, Paolo Piazza created several other works for the emperor. The gift is today identified with the *Adoration of the Magi* in Vienna's Church of St. Aegid Gumpendorf. The image refers to Rudolfian iconography, artefacilia, naturalia, exotic animals, but the main connecting line to the emperor is particularly evident on the coin of the treasure passed by one

of the sages to infant Jesus, where a bust of Rudolf II is depicted. Sources of inspiration are sought in the work of Paolo Veronese and the Bassano family, in engraving models, and especially in the murals Adoration of the Magi by Federico Zuccari in the Venetian church of St. Francesco della Vigna.

From Rudolf's Kunstkammer comes also the alabaster altar of Kunsthistorisches Museum Wien, today attributed to Paolo Piazza. The alabaster altar is mentioned in the inventories of the art chamber; however, the attribution to Paolo Piazza was only determined later by Rudolf Diestelberger, the director of Vienna's collections. The small altarpiece is two-sided: one side shows the Annunciation and the other scene depicts the Adoration of the Shepherds. The painter used a literal quotation from the *Annunciation* in Rome's Church of St. Maria del Orto by Federico Zuccari, who had already provided an inspiration for one of the works mentioned above. The painting *Adoration of the Shepherds* features contemporary engraving patterns and is remarkable for its size and fine details.

The last chapters are devoted to Piazza's activities in Moravia, and in particular, to his stay in Brno in 1607. From this period, no image was previously determined as a work by Piazza for the Capuchin monastery. On the basis of archival documents in monastic chronicles, I have discovered a number of such images by identifying their themes with those mentioned to be created by Paolo Piazza for the first Capuchin monastery in Brno. Among them, the main altarpiece depicts the *Stigmata of St. Francis* and its side wings are paintings of *St. Francis and St. Felix*. The original painting of the Stigmatization was later replaced by Sandrart's Finding of the Holy Cross in the new monastery church, and the image Stigmata of St. Francis was moved to a side chapel. Later, in 1739 it was renovated by a painter of the order, brother Henric Hofer, because of fungal infestation and mold. Today, the chapel houses a work similar in style to Piazza's paintings, but heavily overpainted and supplemented, or possibly presenting a baroque copy of Piazza's work.

Another work inspired by the 16th-century Venetian school is the painting of the Last Supper from the Capuchin refectory in Brno. It resembles the works by Paolo Veronese and other Venetian masters. The paint application, choice of colors as well as the formal features of the *Last Supper* all evoke Paolo Piazza's works. I see an analogy in the representation of Christ, similar to the one in Piazza's main altar painting in Prague.

This thesis aims to stimulate further research on Piazza's activities in the Czech lands and to raise new unanswered questions on this matter. Archival sources and references to other

works by Paola Piazza should provide a basis for further progress in the research. I do not consider the existing research on Paolo Piazza in the Czech lands as final and closed.