

Restored Four Evangelists Sculptures from Vilnius St. John's Church

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Restored four Evangelists sculptures – it is partly forgotten and newly discovered works of art, kept in St. John's Church. These as well as other high artistic value statues further fate determined by the fact that they were finally brought to light. During the rich and complicated history of the St. John's church over twenty wooden baroque sculptures survived stored for a long time in the church basement. Couple years ago their condition was evaluated, and the one after the other began long period of restoration.

Condition of Evangelists' sculptures before restoration was extremely bad. Due to the high relative humidity in the church basement, polychrome was significantly flaked off from the wood base, fragile and easy to slough. In many places polychrome layer were lost, wooden core was visible. Evangelists' clothes were covered with gray, slightly glossy, but greatly darkened layer, it adjusted together with matt gray paint, which was decorated sculptures heads, hands, feet and back. Due to the high relative humidity swollen glue, many glued parts loosened and dropped off, some of them were saved.



ill. 2, 3, 4, 5. Sculptures before restoration: 2a, 2b – The Unknown Evangelist (front and back sides), 3 – The Unknown Evangelist (front sides), 4 – John the Evangelist (front sides), 5 – The Unknown Evangelist (front sides).

Analysis of the polychromy revealed that the Evangelist figures were polychromed and decorated several times. Based on the results of analysis it was decided, partially restore polychromy of sculptures, not to uncover one of the fragmentary survived bottom layers. Foremost task was to reinforce brittle and crumbling polychrome. Open wood areas thoroughly cleaned from dirt. Removed the fragments of toes made of plaster. At the connecting points loosened wooden details: arms, hands, books, clothing, as well as the newly carved small fragments of linden wood assem-

bled with wooden pins and glued into their right locations. Restoration ground was made, yellow and brown pigments were added in it. It was decided to cover with a single layer of this ground open wood areas and leave them without retouching. In this way a restoration ground strengthened vulnerable polychromy of sculptures. Sculpture decor acquired color integrity, which allows admire these amazing late baroque carving works. The altar where sculptures belonged did not survived. Sculptures returned and will be exhibited in one of the chapels of the church.



ill. 1. Detail of St. Augustine altar in the St. Stanislaus Kostka chapel of St. John's church with sculptures of four Evangelists (1968).



ill. 6. Flaking decor layers. Gilding is visible under the layer of aluminium covering.



ill. 7. Toes formed of plaster during previous restoration.



ill. 8. Consolidation of paint and ground layers.



ill. 9a – Gluing details that were separated



9b – Carving and fixing missing wood insertions.



ill. 14. Detail of the Unknown Evangelist: 14a – before restoration, 14b – after restoration.



ill. 10, 11, 12, 13. Sculptures after restoration: 10 – The Unknown Evangelist (restored by Povilas Kuodis), 11 – The Unknown Evangelist (restored by Audronė Davainienė), 12 – John the Evangelist (restored by Greta Žičkuvienė), 13 – The Unknown Evangelist (restored by Alfonsas Šiaulyš).