



RUNDĀLES PILS MUZEJS

THE GREEN HALL OF THE PUZE MANOR HOUSE: RESTORATION OF THE PAINTED WOODEN WALL PANELS WITH SILVER LEAF WOOD CARVINGS



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CONSERVATOR TEAM

ROKAJS (Individual Company)

ABOUT

The Puze Manor house, built in the 1770s, was used for the needs of the Soviet collective farm after the World War II. There were kolkhoz's offices, apartments and a club in the building, then gradually the building was converted to a warehouse. In the Green Hall fodder flour was stored for many years. In 1978, the building was demolished. In 1964, the wall panels, a stove and ceiling constructions from the Green Hall were transferred to the Rundāle Palace Museum and thanks to this they were saved from destruction.

AUTHOR: woodcarver Joseph Slawitzek (?)
DATE: 1770s
OWNER: Rundāle Palace Museum

THE CONDITION BEFORE RESTORATION

A part of the panels was in very poor condition. The wall panels had greatly suffered from woodworms, which were eliminated in 2005 by fumigating the exhibits with methyl bromide. This project was carried out by the German company "Romer BioTec GmbH" with the support of specialists from the Latvian State Institute of Wood Chemistry. Consequences of the long-lasting activity of the woodworms were structural changes in wood with large losses of coating and paint, reaching up to 30% for some wall panels.



The Green Hall after restoration

RESTORATION PROCESS

After the in-depth microscopic examination of the coating and analysis of the chemical tests, the methodology for the restoration process was accepted.

The woodworms' damaged parts were consolidated with 30% solution of Paraloid B72 (acrylic polymer) in Acetone, which was injected into the deepest areas by a medical syringe. This process was repeated two times. The very damaged or lost fragments of wood panels and wood carvings were replaced with new ones in a shape of original.

The investigation and analysis of the wall panels proved that the original layer of the oil paint was 'the green earth' and it was applied on a primer consisting of chalk and a gelatine-type adhesive. The first repaint is the layer of green oil paint from the 1840s, and the top layer of paint from the 1950s – ochre adhesive paint layer.

The woodcuts had been twice silver leafed - originally in the 1770s and then during repairs in the 1840s. Later at the end of the 19th century, the woodcuts which had an unevenly oxidized silver surface had been coated with the dark brown water-based paint to imitate oxidized silver.

Distilled water compresses were used to remove the adhesive-based paint layer.

The repainted green oil paint layer was removed mechanically with a scalpel without damaging the original paint layer.

After conservation of the original coating and removal of overpainting, the primer composition – chalk with 4% PVA (Polyvinyl Alcohol Adhesive) – was applied to supplement the lost original priming. Tinting of the priming areas was performed with oil-based paint in the colour according to the original composition presented in the analyses.

Woodcuts, wood profiles and other silver-coated wood parts, which had lost the silver coating, as well as newly made woodcuts were silver leafed and some parts were treated with silver powder mixed into gum arabic. To eliminate the sheen of the newly applied silver, the surface was retouched. Then the silver surface was covered with a protective varnish (bleached shellac ethyl alcohol solution), applied at least two times to cover all of the new silver surfaces.

The Green Hall is the only complete example of wooden wall finish in the Rococo style in Latvia. Now the restored "Green Hall" is exhibited in the Rundāle Palace Museum as a separate room in a permanent exhibition of European and Latvian applied art – "From the Gothic Style to Art Nouveau".



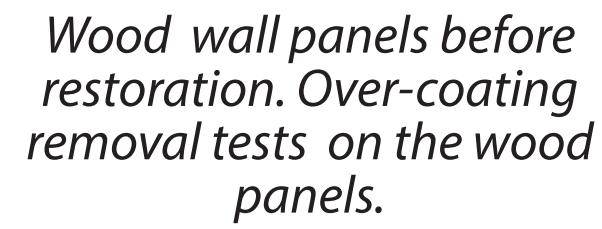
Wood wall panels before restoration. Over-coating removal tests on the wood panels.



Part of the wall panel before restoration damaged by woodworms, and the macro photo with woodworm caverns



Investigation of woodcut surface coatings.



Wood wall panels before restoration. Over-coating removal tests on the wood panels.



Restoration of the wall panels by master conservators of the Rundāle palace museum.



Reconstruction of the lost woodcut after the visible contour left from the original on the surface of the wall panel. Vilnis Lidaka, senior master conservator of interior design items.



Reconstructed woodcuts for the wall panel



The wall panel after restoration.



Decorative wood-carving on the top edge of the mirror frame after restoration



Restoration of the polychromic woodcut. Inese Indrikova, master conservator of polychrome wood.



Decorative woodcut from the top edge of the mirror frame before restoration; The lost parts of the woodcut restored; Woodcut after restoration

