

RESEARCH OF THE PAINTING AT AULEJA CHURCH

Restorers:
LĀSMA KRŪZE,
MONTA BLUMBERGA
Art Academy of Latvia
Restoration Department

Consultants:
ZITA SOKOLOVA
Grandmaster-restorer of easel-paintings
zita.sokolova@gmail.com
Rundāle Palace Museum

Consultants:
RŪTA KAMINSKA D.A., MAIJA TIRZĪTE M.A.,
Art Academy of Latvia Restoration Department docent
restauracija@lma.lv
Art Academy of Latvia, Rīga

INTRODUCTION

The painting arrived at the Rundāle Palace Museum collection from the Auleja Catholic Church, without much accurate data for attributing the portrayed person. Auleja was associated with Jesuit activity for an extended period. A wooden church was already mentioned as having been here in 1530. After the end of Jesuit activities in the Russian Empire in 1820, priests from the diocese served at Auleja Church.



Back in conservation process



Painting before conservation



Painting in conservation process

PAINTING:
19TH CENTURY,
OIL/ CANVAS ON WOOD,
211.5 × 103.5CM

CONDITION OF THE PAINTING

The painting had been stored in the tower of the church. Its surface was covered by a thick layer of dust, dirt, sand and bird excrement. After first research, the conclusion was reached that the painting had been previously restored, but this was done without an understanding of restoration ethics. This is quite obvious from the X-ray image. The painting's losses and tears have been repaired by lining the canvas locally. The painting had been stretched onto a base frame but had been attached onto the plank base with nails at its moment of renewal. It was also concluded that the painting had been densely repainted throughout when the original layer of paint had already been damaged. The paint layer from the overpainting is more flexible than the original layer. The original picture has been preserved throughout, but its degree of preservation varies. It is relatively brittle and thin on the faces and hands of the portrayed persons. The bottom part is seriously damaged. There is poor adhesion between the layer of paint and the base, and the original is less preserved.



Fragment No 1 in conservation process



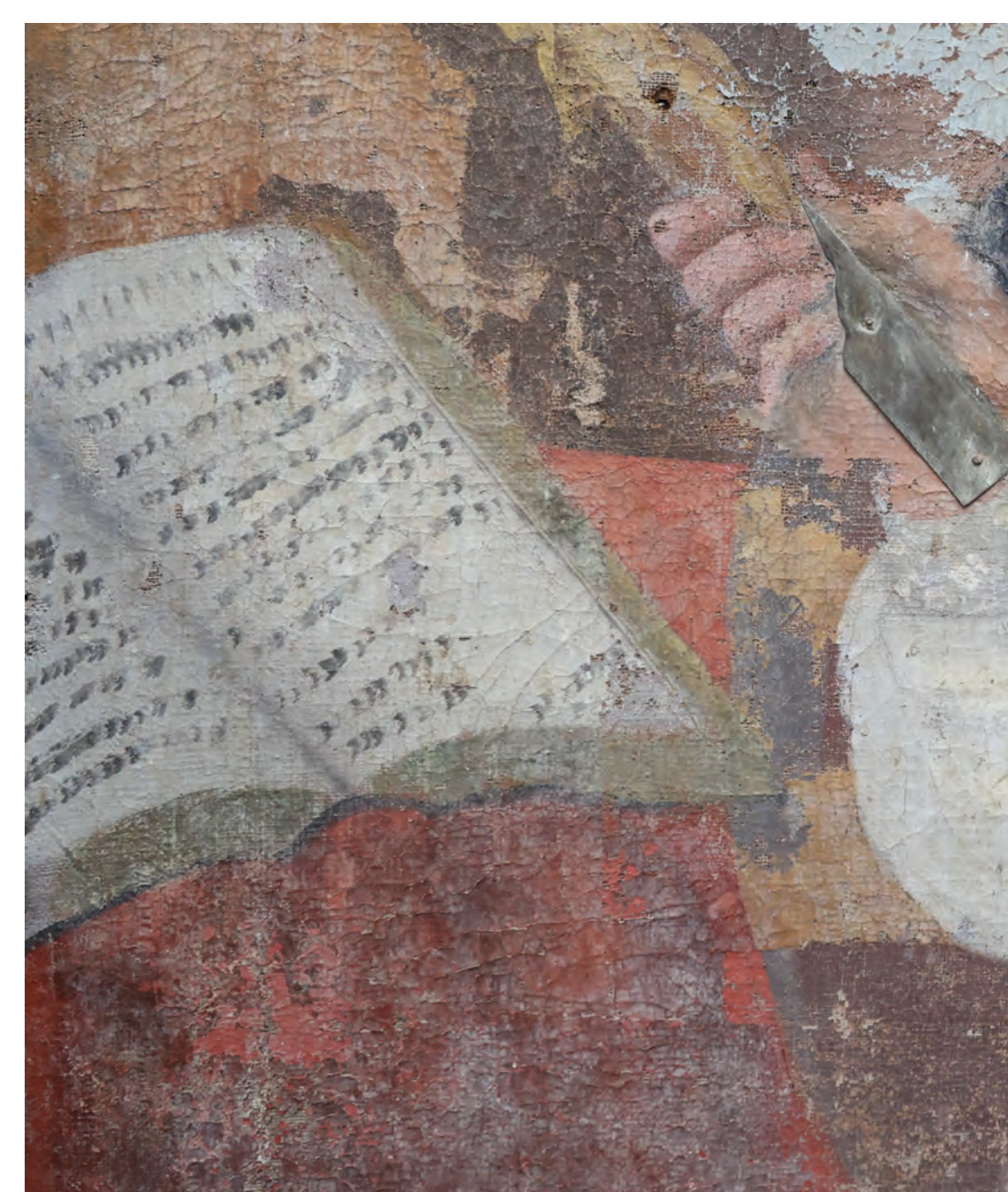
Fragment No 1 X-Ray image



Fragment No 2 X-Ray image



Fragment No 3 before conservation



Fragment No 2 in conservation process

RESEARCH

The painting being restored could have been associated with the period of Jesuit activity at Auleja or could even have referred to it. However, it cannot be convincingly identified from the 1832 inventory description. Currently, the original picture is covered by a layer of overpainting, on the metal applique work of which there are five little stars around the blessed one's head and a fragment of a metal branch (palm branch?) in the hand. The other attributes are a book and a crucifix, which could be attributable to a broader range of saints. The garment (a black robe with a white surplice) is supplemented with a cape in the repainting. In its current image, the painting can be identified as a rendition of St. Jan Nepomucky. St. Jan Nepomucky (around 1340-1393), a priest, the Vicar General of the Prague Archbishopric, a holy martyr, the spread of whose cult was facilitated by the Jesuits. The second version is that it is Francis Xavier (1506-1552), a Jesuit and active missionary who worked in the Middle East, under the layer of paint which had been applied later. He was usually portrayed dressed in a robe and a surplice, above whose stole were his attributes - a crucifix and a lily. A more accurate attribution of the Auleja painting is the task of further research.