

# GĀRSENE ST. GEORGE'S LUTHERAN CHURCH'S "APOSTLE" (1793) WOODEN SCULPTURE

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## Wood restoration:

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## Photographs:

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## ABOUT

The Gārsene St. George's Lutheran Church's apostle, located on right side of the church altar (dated 1793, unknown author or workshop) along with the entire altar itself was obtained for the museum collection in 1935 from the Gārsene Evangelical Lutheran Church. Prior to this, it was found in the chapel of the Budbergs family, owners of Gārsene Manor. The wooden sculpture is polychrome and also gilded.



## RESEARCH

The stratigraphic investigation of samples (examination of the material in cross section) permitted the conclusion that the sculpture's original colouring had been repainted at least twice. The greater part of the figure was painted, imitating the original colour. For example, the garments were originally, and as a result of the repainting too, a greyish white. However, the skin's original reddish tone varies considerably from the final repainting, which is in a greyish tone with very marked reddish circles drawn on the cheeks. The trimming, the belt and the V-style trimming of the garment is gilded. These parts have not been affected by the repainted layers. The hair and the eye colour had been changed from the initial lighter brown to blackish brown after repainting (Fig. 2)

But, there are also details where the colour has been changed radically - the cloak, which was initially blue, was later painted reddish brown and finally a yellowish brown tone.

In parallel with the historical sequence of the layering, it is also possible to use identified materials to determine the age of the paint layers and for dating the item itself.

## RESTORATION

The layers were removed gradually, one by one, until the original colour was revealed. It differs tonally from the recoloured item. The fact that the original head of the figure did not have a beard or mustache was discovered during the restoration process - this came about through the two layers of repainting in later periods.

Investigation of the polychrome paint material allowed an understanding of the sculpture's original appearance and how its colour was changed over time. The thick repainted layers covered the figure's garments, cloak, parts of the body, the hair, face, eyes and lips. The limited crumbling and losses in all layers, as well as the probes undertaken in the paint layers confirmed the later stratification in 1-3 layers.

The identification of materials which was undertaken from samples (chemist Indra Tuņa) assisted the orientation into the composition of the paint in creating a system.

During the process of restoration, the instability of the sculpture's base was eliminated with the assistance of wooden insets. Splitting and losses of wood had developed in the base as a result of deformation (restorer Jānis Meņgels). The new detail has been toned consistently with the colour of the base.

From 1996 to 2013, the item was exhibited in a permanent exhibition at the National History Museum of Latvia called Sacral Art.



1. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



4. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



2. In the restoration process, partially removed repainting



5. After restoration, removed recolouring layers



3. After restoration, removed recolouring layers



13. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



11. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



14. After restoration, removed recolouring layers, colouring



12. In the restoration process, partially removed repainting



10. In the restoration process, partially removed repainting



6. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



7. Before restoration, probes in paint layers



8. In the restoration process, partially removed repainting



9. After restoration, removed recolouring layers