

The Iconography of the Former Main Altar of St. Martin by Georg Raphael Donner in St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava

Katarína ORVISKÁ

Abstract

The sculptural group of St. Martin and the Beggar by Georg Raphael Donner, which was part of the eponymous altar in St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava commissioned by the Primate Emericus Esterházy in 1733, is one of the most important works of art of the first half of the 18th century. This article aims to analyse the probable iconographic models for the Bratislava sculptural group, the iconographic type of St. Martin on horseback and the beggar in the context of the researched work of art, and the atypical elements of the sculptural group, in which authors have searched for specific meanings to this day.

Keywords: Emericus Esterházy, Georg Raphael Donner, Iconography, Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, St Martin's Cathedral, Bratislava, 18th century art, religious art, baroque

The sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar by Georg Raphael Donner (1693–1741), which was part of the eponymous altar in St. Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava commissioned by the Primate Emericus Esterházy (1663/1664–1745)¹ in 1733, is one of the

most important works of art of the first half of the 18th century.² Although the significance of the work has been repeatedly discussed by several authors, notably Mária Pötzl-Malíková,³ Ingeborg Schemper Sparholz,⁴ Miklós Mojzer,⁵ Jiří Kostka⁶ and Jozef

¹ Emericus Esterházy signed most of his life as Frater Emericus. Because of that I decided to use this equivalent of the first name. Other variations of his first name: Imrich, Emmerich, Imre, Imbrih, Emerik, Mirko. Variations of his surname: Estoras, Eszterházy, Esterhaszy, Esterhazij.

² The main altar of St. Martin (1733–1735) is at the beginning of the Baroquisation of the Gothic choir. In 1736 Esterházy hired Donner to make new choir stalls with twenty-eight busts of saints. A year later he commissioned side altars of the Virgin Mary and St. Michael. They were finished the following year and placed near the triumphal arch. During the regotization that took place in 1865–1867, all the altars and choir stalls were removed. Only the sculpture of St. Martin and the beggar, the two adoring angels from the main altar, the 17th century “miraculous” statue of Pieta from the side altar, and the twenty-four busts from the choir stalls survived. These busts are now in the National Gallery in Budapest, together with the adoring angels. Four busts are lost. ŽÁRY, J.: *Dóm sv. Martina v Bratislave*. Bratislava 1990, p. 102.

³ MALÍKOVÁ, M.: *Juraj Rafael Donner a Bratislava*. Bratislava 1993a; PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ, M.: Georg Raphael Donner: Sv. Martin so žobrákom. In: *Pamiatky a múzeá*, 1992a, No. 5–6, pp. 28–30; Idem: *Georg Raphael Donner und Bratislava (1693–1741)*. *Slovakische Nationalgalerie Bratislava, November 1992 – April 1993*. Bratislava 1992 b; Idem: Zu Leben und Werk von Georg Raphael Donner. In: *Georg Raphael Donner. 1693 – 1741. Katalog der Ausstellung: Unteres Belvedere 2. Juni bis 30. September 1993*. Ed. KRAPF, M. Wien 1993 b, pp. 31–83.

⁴ SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ, I.: Lovasszobor az oltáron: gondolatok Georg Raphael Donner pozsonyi fooltáráról, Josef Thaddäus Stammel gráci Szent Marton-oltárával összehasonlítva. In: *Művészettörténeti értesítő*, Vol. 45, 1996a, No. 3–4, pp. 157–168; SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ, I.: Ein Reiterdenkmal am Altar. Gedanken zum Pressburger Hochaltar von Georg Raphael Donner aus Anlass einer Gegenüberstellung zu Josef Stammels Hochaltar der Schlosskirche St. Martin bei Graz. In: *Famosus statuaris Josef Stammel 1695–1765. Barockbildhauer im*



Fig. 1: Georg Raphael Donner, *Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar*. 1734–1735. Alloy of lead and tin, 275 cm. St Martin's Cathedral, Bratislava. Photo: Katarína Ornská.

Haľko,⁷ a comprehensive iconological analysis has never been conducted.⁸ For the purpose of comprehensiveness, the topic will be divided into three separate articles—the iconography of the altar of

St. Martin, the iconology of the altar in terms of its function as a coronation altar, and the iconology of the altar in terms of its function as a main altar, where I will focus mainly on the person of the commissioner. Within the iconography I will focus on probable iconographic models for the Bratislava sculptural group, the iconographic type of St. Martin and the beggar on horseback in relation to the researched artwork, and an analysis of some atypical elements on the sculptural group, in which to this day authors have searched for specific meanings.

Georg Raphael Donner entered the service of Emericus Esterházy in Bratislava in 1729. His first major task was the decoration of the Chapel of St. John the Almsgiver. He presumably completed it at the end of 1731. The transfer of the saint's relics took place the following year in connection with a spectacular festivity. In 1733 Donner was commissioned to decorate the new main coronation altar, which would make him so famous that he would become one of the most important sculptors of his time in Central Europe. This altar also began the Baroqueisation of the choir. On the order of the archbishop, four medieval altars were dismantled on 8 April 1734: the main altar, the altar of the Holy Cross, the altar of the Virgin Mary and the altar of St. Salvator, and, except for the last one, they were transferred to other villages in today southern Slovakia—to Trhová Hradská (Marktstrass, Vásárút) and Dolný Štál (Allischtal, Alistál).⁹

The finished statues of St. Martin, the beggar and the two angels were transported from the garden of the archbishop's summer palace to the cathedral from 9 to 13 July 1735, where they were placed on the prepared plinths. The finished altar was solemn-

Auftrag des Benediktinerstiftes Admont. Ed. BRAUNSTEINER, M. Admont 1996 b, pp. 82–93.

⁵ MOJZER, M.: Egy jelmezes mecénás. Esterházy Imre hercegprímás. In: *Sub minervae nationis praesidio*. Ed. TÓKEI, F. Budapest 1989, pp. 64–70; Idem: Donner egykori pozsonyi főoltáráról. In: *Művészettörténeli értesítő*, Vol. 41, 1992a, No. 1–4, pp. 36–44; Idem: L'altare tardobarocco: il caso dell'altar maggiore del Duomo di Bratislava. In: *Arte cristiana* 80, 1992 b, Vol. 753, pp. 467–472; Idem: Die szenische Ordnung des Pressburger Hochaltars von Georg Raphael Donner. In: *Georg Raphael Donner. 1693–1741. Katalog der Ausstellung: Unteres Belvedere 2. Juni bis 30. September 1993*. Ed. KRAPF, M. Wien 1993, pp. 101–107.

⁶ KOSTKA, J.: *Donner a jeho okruh na Slovensku*. Bratislava 1954.

⁷ HAĽKO, J. – KOMORNÝ, Š.: *Dóm: Katedrála sv. Martina v Bratislave*. Bratislava 2010, especially pp. 332, 334, 337–340, 351, 354.

⁸ My research is based on the iconological method defined by Erwin Panofsky. PANOFSKY, E.: *Ikonografie a Ikonologie: Úvod do studia renesančního umění*. In: Idem, *Význam ve výtvarném umění*. Praha 2013, especially pp. 44–47 and 52–55.

⁹ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), pp. 25–29, 37.

ly consecrated by Bishop Sigmund Berényi on St. Emeric's Day on 5 November 1735. Donner received an impressive payment of 4271 guildens for the new main altar. The texts of the receipts are laconic, so we do not know how high the net fee was. We learn almost nothing about Donner's collaborators from the economic reports either.¹⁰

We know that the altar originally reached almost to the vault of the choir from the preserved sources, so it was about eighteen metres high.¹¹ It consisted of four monumental columns built in a semicircle. It is known from the description of Gerhard Corneil van Driesch, Emericus Esterházy's lay secretary, that they were made of stone quarried near the village of Süttő (Schitte) with a marble texture on the surface.¹² The columns were surmounted by a cornice and four volutes carrying an oversized imitation of the Hungarian crown. Beneath the crown, festoons were wound on the volutes. The main scene consisted of a sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar placed between the two rear columns. St. Martin in Hungarian clothing leans towards the beggar in a loincloth with a distinct musculature sitting in front of the horse's raised foreleg. An unusual feature is not only that the saint is dressed in Hungarian clothing, but also that instead of a saddle he is seated on a lion skin with marked lion paws in front of and behind the saint's leg. The chain on Martin's cloak is similarly peculiar. It looks as if it belongs to the clothing of a modern nobleman. A clear line stretches across the sculptural group, leading through St. Martin's head and chest to the cloak, the beggar's arm, and chest, and is finally finished with the beggar's stick. The work was made unconventionally from an alloy of lead and tin without any surface finishing. The adoring angels projecting with the plinths in front of the front pair of columns were made of similar material. The adoring gesture was directed towards the tabernacle. The vases in the intercolumns decorated with festoons served as a distinct decoration.

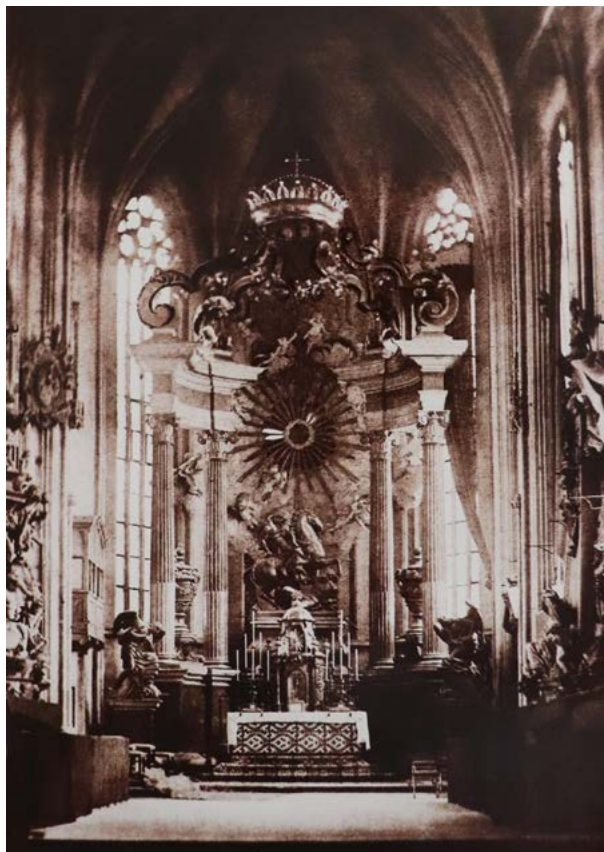


Fig. 2: Georg Raphael Donner, Main altar of St. Martin in St Martin's Cathedral, Bratislava. 1733–1735, ca 18 m, preserved photograph from before 1865. Photo: HALKO, J. – KOMORNÝ, Š.: *Dóm: Katedrála sv. Martina v Bratislave*. Bratislava 2010.

However, we do not know further details. Surviving visual sources suggest that they must have also been made of lead and tin alloy.

Although the authors do not usually refer to this significant element, from the level of the festoons on the volutes to the figure of St. Martin, a cloudy sphere with angels stretched in the background. Because of the limitations of the only surviving

¹⁰ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), pp. 37.

¹¹ The description of the altar itself has been discussed by many authors, e.g.: MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 38; CHMELINOVÁ, K.: *Miesto zázrakov: premeny barokového oltára*. 24. jún – 28. august 2005. Bratislava 2005, p. 46; KOSTKA

1954 (see in note 6), p. 27; HALKO – KOMORNÝ 2010 (see in note 7), p. 332.

¹² National Széchényi library, Driesch Epist. 11/322. ff. 279–280; SZELESTEI, L.: Adalékok Esterházy Imre hercegprímás mupártolásához. In: *Művészettörténelmi értesítő*, Vol. 50, 2001, No. 3–4, p. 289.



Fig. 3: Franz Messmer and Wenzel Pohl, *Coronation of Maria Theresa in Bratislava (1741)*, 1768. Oil on canvas, ca 250 × 140 cm. Hungarian Embassy in Vienna. Photo: bratislavskerozky.sk.

photography and the numerous drawings and prints, we can only assume that they held nothing and added dynamism to this sphere with their movement. At the level of the cornice there was a large glory with sunrays that seemed to come directly from the clouds. Behind it was a newly built window, through which the light fell directly on the tabernacle. According to Alfred Schnerich, the glory was made of coloured glass and the clouds of stucco.¹³ The altar was colour-balanced and the work with light and materials played an important role. In one of the official coronation portraits of Maria Theresa in the cathedral, we have a complete image of the colour scheme of the altar. The portrait was executed by Franz Messmer and Wenzel Pohl directly on the Empress's commission in 1768.¹⁴ Given the circumstances of its creation, we can consider it authentic. The second source, which has an identical colour scheme, is a watercolour by Matthias Kern (1801–1852) from 1837.¹⁵ In these depictions, the white columns on white plinths with gilded feet and capitals bear a white cornice with gilded volutes and crown. A white cloud sphere with white angels is illuminated by a gold-coloured glory. A dark grey matt sculptural group with vases and angels provides a contrast to this scheme.

As Mária Pötzl-Malíková pointed out, Donner's lead statues did not distinguish on the altar by their whiteness or bright colours but formed its dark accent.¹⁶ The brightest point of the whole compo-

¹³ SCHNERICH, A.: Über Donners Martin-Altar zu Pressburg und Stammels Hochaltar in St. Martin bei Graz. In: *Der Kirchenschmuck*, Vol. 29, 1898, No. 3, p. 34.

¹⁴ The coronation portrait is part of a cycle of paintings depicting individual parts of the Bratislava coronation of 1741. They were made for the interiors of the Hungarian Chancellery in Vienna. SERFŐZŐ, S.: A Magyar és az Erdélyi Udvari Kancellária bécsi palotájának Habsburg portrégalériái. In: *Reneszánsz és barokk Magyarországon. Művészettörténeti tanulmányok Galavics Géza tiszteletére*. Ed. GULYÁS, B. – MIKÓ, Á. – UGRY, B., Budapest 2021, p. 219.

¹⁵ Matthias (Matthäus) Kern, watercolour of the interior of St Martin's Cathedral in Bratislava, 1837, inv. no. 14121, Albertina, Vienna.

¹⁶ I will elaborate on the reasons for the use of lead in the creation of sculptural decoration in the article on the iconology of the altar of St. Martin.

sition was the glory in the middle of the stucco wall of the sanctuary. The concept of the building was so well elaborated that in the morning during mass the rising sun flooded the entire sanctuary with its rays from the newly built window, giving the space and the restrained altar structure an “unearthly” character.¹⁷ Ivan Rusina also pointed to the light properties of lead—unlike commonly used bronze, lead has a softer and silkier sheen. It is duller in reflection and distinguished by its plasticity, softness of modelling, and contrasts of light and shadow.¹⁸

St. Martin was born in 316 or 317 in Roman Sabaria (now the city of Szombathely, Hungary) as the son of a Roman tribune.¹⁹ Martin learnt about Christianity at the age of ten, subsequently became a catechumen in the city of Pavia. On his father’s insistence, he took the military oath at the age of fifteen, beginning active military service at the age of seventeen. While he was serving in Amiens in Northern France, he performed his most famous act of mercy—sharing his cloak with a beggar. One day, as Martin was returning to the city during a severe winter frost, he saw a beggar lying naked at the gate. None of the passers-by took notice of him. To prevent the beggar from freezing to death, Martin decided to give him half of his cloak, because he had already donated all the money. He cut the cloak with his sword and covered himself with the remaining half. Some of the passers-by started laughing, others were ashamed that they had not helped the beggar. The next day St. Martin had a dream in which Jesus Christ appeared to him in the half of the cloak given to the beggar, saying to the angels, “Here Martin, though still a catechumen, has clothed me with his cloak.” Christ then declared that it was he who was dressed in the cloak in the person of the beggar. Soon thereafter, Martin left the army, was baptized, and became a disciple of Hilary of Poitiers, who ordained him an acolyte. In



Fig. 4: Georg Raphael Donner, *Adoring angel*. 1734–1735. Alloy of lead and tin, 200 cm. Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest. Photo: wikioo.org, licence PD.

361 he founded a monastery in the Frankish town of Ligugé. He also devoted himself to missionary activity from Gaul to the Danube. He became bishop of Tours in 371 as a popular figure among the people. Four years later he founded a monastery in Marmoutier, not far from Tours. St. Martin died on a pastoral journey on November 8, 397 in Candes.²⁰

When analysing the iconography of the main scene from the Bratislava altar, some interesting questions arise. The use of clothing, jewellery, the material of the statue, lion skin instead of a saddle, are very unusual for the iconography of St. Martin.

¹⁷ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 41.

¹⁸ RUSINA, I.: *Renesančná a baroková plastika v Bratislave*. Bratislava 1983, p. 24.

¹⁹ There is a large number of academic publications about St. Martin, see e.g.: DAM, R. v.: *Leadership and Community in Late Antique Gaul*. Berkeley 1992; DAM, R. v.: *Saints and their miracles in late antique Gaul*. Princeton 2011; MAUREY, Y.: *Medieval*

music, legend, and the cult of St. Martin: the local foundations of a universal saint. Cambridge 2014; ROSEN, J.: *Martin von Tours: der barmherzige Heilige*. Darmstadt 2016.

²⁰ BANDMANN, G. – KIRSCHBAUM, E.: *Lexikon der christlichen Ikonographie*. Bd. 7. Rom 1994, column 572; SEVERUS, S. – BURTON, P.: *Sulpicius Severus’ Vita Martini*. Oxford 2017, p. 97, 99; FORTUNATUS, V. H. C. – HORKA, R.: *Život sväteho Martina*. Bratislava 2019, p. 67.

Let us start with the iconographic type and composition. According to Mária Pötzl-Malíková, they are very atypical. St. Martin was traditionally depicted standing with the beggar at his feet since the Middle Ages. However, more often as a rider passing by the beggar standing or kneeling by the roadside. In these equestrian depictions, St. Martin almost always leans away from the head of a calmly trotting horse and cuts his cloak with his raised sword. A scene of this type was also located in the Bratislava cathedral from 1667 on one of the painted glass panels in the window of the choir.²¹ The scene is usually very static. An analysis of the iconography leads the author to the conclusion that the scene of St. George defeating the dragon, or depictions of victorious warlords / noblemen with defeated opponents underfoot, must have been the model. She thus rather understands the sculptural group of St. Martin as a Baroque equestrian monument.²²

St. Martin facing forward towards the horse's head, while the beggar sits / stands at his front feet, is supposed to belong to a very atypical iconographic type. Meanwhile, the iconography of St. Martin and the beggar has a huge number of types from the Middle Ages to the first half of the 18th century. While researching these iconographic types, I have become familiar with approximately two hundred and sixty depictions of St. Martin and the beggar on horseback and ninety without a horse, mostly of Central European provenance. Thanks to that, I could trace several established types. In the Middle Ages, as Mária Pötzl-Malíková has correctly observed, the most common depiction (especially in

Central Europe) is of St. Martin with his back turned to the horse's head, parting the cloak to the beggar sitting / standing at horse's hind legs. Sometimes the saint is turned so much that he is sitting facing the horse's hind legs.

The beggar is rarely captured sitting / standing in the middle part of the horse, while Martin turns to the beggar from the horse's head and exposes his chest. Meanwhile, the clothing is not settled. Martin is most often depicted in loose drapery with a cloak or as a soldier or wealthy noble. Similarly, there is great variety in the depiction of the beggar—sometimes he is captured in loincloth, underwear, loose drapery, or tattered clothing. His most common attribute is a stick. Particularly from the 15th century onwards, he sometimes lacks one or both legs to emphasise his wretchedness, in which case he is usually wearing wooden prosthesis(es). Bandages often appear in such a case. Sometimes even sores / rashes appear all over his body. Paradoxically more common—though still rare—is the beggar appearing at the horse's front legs, while Martin, with his head turned towards the horse's head, is splitting the mantle. However, I have found this iconographic type in only six instances, including five manuscripts and one fresco.²³

In southern and western Europe, especially in the Italian and Dutch environments, the beggar began to appear in the middle part of the horse during the 15th century. By the 16th century, such a type was already quite common, and finally, from the 17th century onwards, it becomes dominant. On the contrary, he was very rarely placed at the rear of the horse. It also became quite common to capture the beggar in

²¹ In the church there was one more scene with St. Martin and the beggar on the coat of arms on the vault of the choir from 1487. St. Martin in burgher's clothing turns to the beggar at the hind legs of the horse dividing the cloak. The choir vault has an approximate height of 18.5 metres, so that the still preserved scene on the coat of arms is extremely difficult to discern with the naked eye. People with poor eyesight could not even distinguish the figure of St. Martin on horseback from the beggar. The depiction in question is very difficult to notice, which suggests that it could not have been of greater significance for the iconography of St. Martin from the high altar.

²² MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 39; PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1993 b (see in note 3), p. 55.

²³ St. Albans Psalter, miniature with the dividing of the cloak and the dream of St. Martin, 1120–1130, Dombibliothek Hildesheim; Wauchier de Denain, *Lives of the Saints*, miniature with the dividing of the cloak, 1225–1249, f. 99, The British Library, London; Bible of William of Devon, miniature with the Coronation of the Virgin Mary, the Crucifixion lined with cherubs, the Virgin and Child lined with Peter and Paul and the scene of St. Martin dividing the cloak with the kneeling cleric, 1250–1274, f. 4, The British Library, London; Gradual from Mainz, manuscript Leaf with Initial S with the dividing the cloak, around 1280, fol. 207, Church of St. Dionysius and Valentinus, Kiedrich, Germany; Jacobus, *Legenda sanctorum aurea, verdeutsch in elsässischer Mundart*, miniature with the dividing of the cloak, 1362, fol. 187, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich; Fresco of St. Martin, Church of St. Martin, 1301–1315, Lenningen, Germany.

front of the horse. Central Europe is an exception. In Late Gothic art, the beggar was mostly placed at the back of the horse until the 16th century, and in the 17th century this type appears in works of art that still in some way followed the Late Gothic tradition. The beggar is placed in the middle and in the front of a horse in direct proportion to the spread of the Baroque. In terms of clothing, St. Martin is more commonly depicted in this period as a soldier in both antique armour and period-updated attire, with loose drapery almost completely disappearing. The variety of the beggar's clothing remains unchanged, but the depiction of musculature becomes more lifelike. The composition of St. Martin and the beggar from the former main altar in Bratislava is therefore contemporary and follows the common Baroque iconographic type. It is therefore impossible to look for specific meanings in the composition as something atypical.

A certain anomaly and peculiarity are represented by the iconographic type of St. Martin in sculptural artworks, especially in the South German environment between the 16th and 18th centuries.²⁴ In this case, the beggar sits, lays, or stands at the front feet of the horse, which most often has one leg raised, while Martin, facing the horse's head, divides the cloak. Compositionally we can see some parallels with Donner's work, but the appearance of Martin and the beggar in these cases follows more of the late Gothic tradition. Since all the works are located in southern Germany and we know that Donner spent some time in Dresden and Salzburg and had contacts in Munich, he may have been familiar with them in situ, and they could potentially have served as a source of inspiration for the composition.

I would like to draw attention to an iconographic type that seems to be a model for Georg Raphael Donner. As far as the probable models are concerned, we will always speak of probability, since the contracts for the creation of the altar have not



Fig. 5: Unknown author, St. Martin gives part of his cloak to a beggar. 1515–1525. Wood, 95 cm. Parish Church of St. Martin in Breitenbrunn, Germany. Photo: europeana.eu, licence CC 4.0.

survived to this day, and similarly, all the preparatory artistic material that would help us to reconstruct the development of the altar's conception is absent.²⁵

Important for this research are two paintings of St. Martin and the beggar by Anthony van Dyck (1599–1641), a pupil of Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640). The first painting was executed around 1618 for the Church of St. Martin in Zaventem, Belgium. The second was executed for an unknown commissioner between 1619–1620, now Windsor

²⁴ As an example, see sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, 1501/1515, Munich, a private collection, a photograph available in the database Bildindex; Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, 1515–1525, Parish church of St. Martin, Breitenbrunn; Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, 1615, castle chapel of the castle in Holzgünz; Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, 1650, Parish

church of St. Martin, Ehingen; Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, 1701/1715, Church of St. Stephen, Genhofen; Johann Baptist Hops, Sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar, around 1720, Church of St. Martin, Grundsheim.

²⁵ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 38.



Fig. 6: Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin dividing his cloak*. About 1618. Oil on panel, 171,6 × 158 cm. Saint Martin's Church in Zaventem, Belgium. Photo: wikipedia.org, licence PD.



Fig. 7: Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin dividing his cloak*. 1619–1620. Oil on canvas, 182,9 × 172,7 cm. Windsor Castle, Windsor. Photo: wikipedia.org, licence PD.

Castle. These paintings, very similar in type, were made under the influence of van Dyck's training with Peter Paul Rubens. Van Dyck took the composition of St. Martin and the beggar from his oil sketch. In both paintings, except for St. Martin and the beggar, there are also Martin's servant and the guard at the gate. Instead of one beggar, there are two beggars in the Zaventem version and even

three with two small children in the Windsor version.²⁶ These paintings were so well received that they were copied a lot.²⁷ We can mention the prints by Jan Lauwryn Krafft (1694–1775)²⁸ and Thomas Chambars (1724–1789).²⁹ The type of St. Martin that appears in van Dyck's work resonated throughout a generation of artists, for example Pieter Soutman (1593/1601–1657) and Karel Škréta (1610–1674).³⁰

²⁶ PADRÓN, M. D.: Un Van Dyck de España en la Corona de Inglaterra: adiciones y precisiones a "San Martín partiendo su capa" del palacio de Windsor. In: *BSAA Arte: Boletín del Seminario de Estudios de Arte*, 2006, No. 72, pp. 160–164.

²⁷ The similarity between Anthony van Dyck's painting of St. Martin and the beggar from the Church of St. Martin in Zaventem, Belgium (mistakenly identified as a painting from Windsor Castle), Karel Škréta's painting of St. Martin, and Georg Raphael Donner's sculptural group of St. Martin was also noted by Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz, who, however, did not analyse these works further. SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ 1996 b (see in note 4), p. 88.

²⁸ Jan Lauwryn Krafft after Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin*

dividing the cloak, etching, between 1704–1765, inv. no. RP-P-OB-47.502, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

²⁹ The print by Thomas Chambars proves the popularity of the type even in the second half of the 18th century. At the same time, a certain contemporary incorrectness is interesting, when the van Dyck's paintings were wrongly attributed to the work of Peter Paul Rubens. – Thomas Chambars after Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin dividing the cloak*, etching, 1766, inv. no. 1872,0113.804, The British Museum, London.

³⁰ Cornelis Visscher after Pieter Soutman and Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin dividing the cloak*, etching, around 1650, inv. no. 1839,0413.177, The British Museum, London. – Karel Škréta, painting of *St. Martin dividing the cloak*, oil on canvas, after 1650, inv. no. O 18930, National Gallery Prague.

St. Martin, facing the horse's head, divides the cloak for the beggar, who is seated at the level of the horse's raised foreleg. St. Martin is dressed in the fashion of the modern period, a half-naked beggar with a distinctly "classical" musculature, wears a loincloth and a band of cloth around his head. Many of the elements that scholars have not been able to classify iconographically in the Bratislava sculptural group—the contemporary updated clothing, the composition with the beggar at the front legs of the horse, the muscular beggar in a loincloth,³¹ the strip of cloth around his head,³² the beggar proportionally corresponding to the size of St. Martin³³—are found in all artworks following paintings of Anthony van Dyck. Since all of them are paintings or prints, we can assume that Donner became acquainted with this type through prints. We may note that while statues of St. Martin and the beggar correspond to their counterparts in paintings and prints, Donner's sculptural group lacks the other figural staffage. This is probably due to a change of medium as well as a different purpose—it was most important to capture the scene of St. Martin and the beggar for the Bratislava coronation altar, which would not be distracted by other figures or decorations.

³¹ Mária Pötzl-Malíková assumed that the beggar with a classical-looking musculature appeared exclusively in Italian, especially Renaissance, art and related the relief of St. Martin and the beggar by Andrea Briosco Il Riccio (c. 1470–1532) in Ca d'Oro to the Bratislava work. We have seen that this type of beggar also appeared in Dutch art. Moreover, this relief does not correspond to its Bratislava counterpart iconographically, but stylistically. This means that Donner may not even have been familiar with this artwork, since he could have become acquainted with Italian cinquecento artworks and their musculature during his trips or from the Liechtenstein collections in Vienna, where he got to know not only works of 17th century French and Italian art, but also ancient artefacts. – PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1992a (see in note 3), p. 30.

³² Miklós Mojzer claimed that the cloth around the head of the beggar from the Bratislava sculpture was meant to resemble the bandage on the eyes of the mocked Jesus Christ and, in connection with the loincloth, to be an allegorical representation of Christ. Jozef Haľko sees in the capture of the beggar's head the face of Christ, which is also suggested by the barely perceptible band on the forehead with a knot at the nape. Thus, it is supposed to be an allusion to the scarf that binds Christ's eyes on the medieval iconographic model of the man of sorrows. However, in the above context, both



Fig. 8: Karel Škréta, *St. Martin sharing his cloak with a beggar*. After 1650. Oil on canvas, 324 × 186 cm. National Gallery Prague. Photo: ngprague.cz.

arguments seem unlikely. MOJZER 1992 b (see in note 5), p. 469; HAĽKO – KOMORNÝ 2010 (see in note 7), p. 354.

³³ According to Mária Pötzl-Malíková, the beggar used to be depicted only as a necessary accessory of the holy act. He served as a minor attribute of the saint, a small, pitiful figure. Donner, however, decided to elevate him and is equal in size and importance to the rider. This argument is partly true, as indeed the beggar was repeatedly depicted as disproportionately smaller in the Middle Ages. However, as we have shown, in the modern period the beggar is already commonly captured proportionally correct to the size of the saint. – MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 39; PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1992a (see in note 3), p. 30.



Fig. 9: Cornelis Visscher after Pieter Soutman and Anthony van Dyck, *St. Martin and the beggar*. 1650. Etching, 44 × 31,2 cm. Photo: wellcomecollection.org, licence PDM.

³⁴ The editor Jiří Kostka saw the compositional affinity of the figure of the beggar in the work of Antonio del Pollaiuolo (1431/32–1496). His drawing for the monument of Virginio Orsini depicts a half-lying figure in such a position that we can speak of the same placement of the legs as in Donner's work, and the same raised arms. With all my efforts, I have not been able to find a drawing of the monument of Virginio Orsini. However, I have found a drawing of the monument of Francesco Sforza that matches the description. It was made between 1480 and 1485, now located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The only common compositional element in this depiction is the rearing horse. Donner could get familiar with it not only from equestrian monuments, but also from portraits of nobles and military commanders or from coronation equestrian portraits. The assumption of equestrian monuments as a model was driven to the extreme by Miklós Mojzer. According to him, the Hungarian royal equestrian monuments could potentially have been used as a model, which, however, did not occur

We can see that the composition and type of St. Martin and the beggar, as created by Donner, is not as uncommon as scholars have thought to this day—it appeared in the milieu of Dutch artists and their followers in Central Europe as well as in the south of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, the composition of St. George and the dragon, with which it is still associated today, along with the equestrian monuments did not have to serve as a model at all.³⁴

in Kingdom of Hungary from the 14th century onwards. At the end of his iconographic analysis, he concludes that the sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar may represent a national monument linking people, nation, and state. Since Kingdom of Hungary was a multi-ethnic state, with the Germans (respectively the German-speaking population) forming the largest national group in Bratislava throughout the modern period, with the fact that according to the 19th century census by nationality, until 1880 the Slovaks were in second place and the Magyars in third place, such claims sound very peculiar. A specific analysis of the motif of the plinth and its iconography was conducted by Ingeborg Schemper-Sparholz. According to her, it has the shape of a sarcophagus and resembles a castrum doloris. This motif is supposed to refer to the apotheosis of St. Martin and his acceptance among the saints, which was also described by Venantius Fortunatus (c. 540–c. 600) in his book *Vita S. Martini*. This assumption should be confirmed by the columns built in a semicircle evoking the gate of the city of Amiens, the adoring angels on projecting plinths and the cloudy sphere with angels in the background. The busts of saints on the choir stalls were also intended to complement the transcendent character. In the iconographic type of the apotheosis of St. Martin, the saint is depicted on a cloud supported by angels, who are surrounded by a cloud sphere with other angels, while the heavens, sometimes depicted as sunrays, are at the top. It should be noted here, however, that because of the tabernacle only the top of the plinth was visible. Similarly, columns in a semicircle were a common architectural solution, e.g., with Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach (1656–1723) and his son Joseph Emanuel (1693–1742). Moreover, the angels do not direct their gesture of adoration towards St. Martin, but to the tabernacle, as they are placed on lower plinths. Since the Bratislava sculptural group was intended to represent an iconographic type of St. Martin on horseback and the beggar, when the individual elements of the altar commonly appear on various contemporary altars (the columns in a semicircle, the plinth, the cloudy sphere with angels and the glory), it is unlikely that these elements refer to the apotheosis. KOSTKA 1954 (see in note 6), p. 29; MOJZER 1989 (see in note 5), pp. 65–67; SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ 1996a (see in note 4), p. 164; SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ 1996 b (see in note 4), p. 85.

According to Mária Pöztzl-Malíková, Donner took up the composition of rulers or victorious warlords with a defeated opponent under the hooves of a rearing horse but gave it a new and contradictory meaning. Here the armed rider is not destroying the enemy but performing an act of mercy. The motif of the rearing horse gives the whole scene a heroic character that was previously unknown in St. Martin's depictions. The beggar forms a peaceful counterpoint to the dramatic motif of the rider. The distance between the giver and the recipient is lost. The saint does not sit upright on the horse but bends to the beggar.³⁵ It is true that there is an element in the depiction of St. Martin's iconography that I have not found anywhere else—the rearing horse. However, this motif is commonly found not only in several equestrian monuments and monuments to victorious warlords / rulers of modern period, but also in equestrian portraits of nobles / military commanders and coronation equestrian portraits. There are therefore two possible reasons—both equally likely—why Donner selected this motif: 1.) it was a stylistic solution to give the scene more dynamism and contrast between the dynamic rider and the static beggar; 2.) the depiction of the rearing horse has a symbolic meaning. Not only was the horse an integral part of the Hungarian coronation ceremony, but the Habsburgs were also commonly depicted in coronation prints in their coronation attire on a rearing horse. There is also a large number of cabinet artworks with Habsburg kings as victorious commanders.³⁶

The choice of composition begins to make even more sense when we look at the altar as a whole. The sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar formed the central scene on the approximately 18-metre-high

altar on a semi-circular plan with four columns. The triangular composition with the protruding beggar half-lying beneath the horse's raised foreleg visually takes up more space, creating a line between St. Martin's head, the sabre dividing the cloak and the beggar's torso with the stick, and thus also follows the line of the right vase and the adoring angel. This creates two triangular compositions—in the central part the sculptural group itself, the second triangular composition is formed by the arrangement of the adoring angels, the vases, and the sculptural group itself. This arrangement is given expression by the glory with sunrays located directly above the central scene, which is topped by a crown. Compositionally, this has created a closed whole, where the central part with St. Martin and the beggar plays a key role. It means that the sculptural group cannot be studied separately from the altar, and that its composition is primarily a formal and artistic, not an iconological, solution.

Similarly, in the appearance of the beggar we do not need to look for content, but for form.³⁷ Donner himself probably decided on his appearance based on his personal preferences. As a detailed formal analysis of the sculptor's work by Mária Pöztzl-Malíková shows, Georg Raphael Donner drew inspiration from the Italian Cinquecento and Classical antiquity. He rejected Baroque decorativeness, preferred classical solutions, and suppressed Baroque emotionality. Compositionally, he drew on the Baroque.³⁸ These features can already be found in his early work for the Mirabell Castle and the altar of St. John the Almsgiver in Bratislava. Already here we can find Donner's characteristic athletic angels with a similar musculature to that of the angels in the main altar. The sculptural group of St. Martin and

³⁵ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 39–40.

³⁶ This idea will be elaborated in the article on the iconology of the altar of St. Martin in terms of its function as a coronation altar.

³⁷ Miklós Mojzer is one of the authors who searched for ancient motifs in ancient sculptures. He argued that the angels are only in loincloths because they refer to the nakedness of the beggar. The half-naked unearthly beings were thus meant to complement the (ancient) divinity hidden in the half-naked

beggar (nudity associated with the Greco-Roman motif of the naked god). While the author associated the beggar with Apollo, the angels with Hermes. I disagree with this interpretation, according to which Donner should have read not only the writings of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (4 BC–65) but also the *Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri (1265–1321), as it can be neither confirmed nor refuted. At the same time, no plausible arguments are provided for the theory itself. – MOJZER 1992a (see in note 5), pp. 38–39.

³⁸ PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1993 b (see in note 3), p. 35.

the beggar fits stylistically into the work of Georg Raphael Donner to such an extent that it is impossible to look for specific elements of meaning in it.³⁹

An unusual element on the sculptural group from Bratislava is the clothing of St. Martin. Although all scholars agree that Martin dressed in Hungarian clothing is a very rare phenomenon, there is no consensus on what he is really wearing. Some say it is a magnate's garment,⁴⁰ some assume it is a hussar uniform,⁴¹ and some use the generic term Hungarian clothing / costume.⁴² This phenomenon is in fact something of a riddle, complicated by the fact that the noble attire was based on the hussar uniform.

The hussar uniform consisted of a short coat called dolman with a row of drawstring fastenings. On top of it, the hussars wore a similarly laced and fur-trimmed coat, in Slovak called mentieka (in Hungarian mente), usually draped over the left shoulder. The narrow trousers were richly decorated at the two front plackets. A sash of coloured wool, on which knitted tubes were strung like buttons, encircled the waist. A kalpak of black or brown fur served as a headdress. A special feature of the hussars' equipment was a flat leather bag called sabretache worn over the right shoulder. The lid of the sabretache, especially for officers, was richly decorated with embroideries with folk motifs, later with the coat of arms of the regimental owner. A powder horn was attached to the bandolier on the black leather cartridge bag. The armament consisted of a curved sabre of oriental type in a leather scabbard, a carbine, and a pistol. The horses had saddles of the Hungarian

type, and a decorated caparison was commonly used. Colours played an important role in recognising regiments. The colours of the dolman and the mentieka often changed when the regiment changed ownership.⁴³ The clothing of the nobles also consisted of the dolman, the mentieka, narrow trousers, boots, and a kalpak. The dolman used to be decorated and fastened at the breast with precious clasps or chains. The winter mentiekas were lined with fur.⁴⁴

It is therefore not possible to determine from St. Martin's clothing what kind it is. The colours of the uniform, the sabretache, the saddle, the caparison, the weaponry are missing to identify the hussars' uniform, which would allow assigning it to a specific regiment. The main element that suggests that it is a hussar is the officer's kalpak. The lion skin is also remarkable. It was popular among hussars to wear a lion skin draped over the shoulder, but it was not common to sit on it. On the contrary, the massive chain on the mentieka is evidence in favour of the assumption that he was a noble. In appearance it resembles a chain from the Order of the Golden Fleece, the pendant itself is missing. St. Martin is therefore dressed in clothes from which it is impossible to determine whether they are military or noble; he is wearing an officer's cap on his head and a noble chain similar to the chain of the Order of the Golden Fleece on the mentieka. However, we do know that several hussar commanders—nobles have been portrayed in the Hungarian uniform with all the attributes, together with the officer's kalpak and the noble's chain / embellished clasp.⁴⁵ St. Martin should

³⁹ If interested in a formal analysis of Donner's work, see notes 2, 3 and 5.

⁴⁰ MALÍKOVÁ 1993a (see in note 3), p. 39; PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1993 b (see in note 3), p. 54; PÖTZL-MALÍKOVÁ 1992a (see in note 3), p. 29; MOJZER 1989 (see in note 5), p. 65.

⁴¹ HAĽKO – KOMORNÝ 2010 (see in note 7), p. 339; KOVÁCS, P.: *Donner*. Budapest 1979, p. 18.

⁴² SCHEMPER-SPARHOLZ 1996a (see in note 4), p. 161; PIGLER, A.: *Georg Raphael Donner*. Leipzig 1929, p. 45; RUSINA 1983 (see in note 18), p. 94.

⁴³ SKALA, H.: *Slávne časy cisárskej jazdy v 17.-19. storočí*. Prešov 2005, p. 26; SÁGVÁRI, G. – SOMOGYI, G. *Das Buch der Husaren*. Budapest 1999.

⁴⁴ LENGYELOVÁ, T.: *Život na slachtickom dvore: odev, strava, domácnosť, hygiena, voľný čas*. Bratislava 2016, p. 80–81; HÖLLRIGL, J.: Magyar és török viseletek a XVI–XVII. Században. In: *Magyar művelődéstörténet 3. A kereszténység védőbástyája*. Ed. DOMANOVSKY, S. Szekszárd 1993, pp. 360–361.

⁴⁵ Martin Engelbrecht, portrait of count Anton von Kalnocki as hussar commander, print, around 1740, inv. no. HB 23927,47, Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg; Martin Engelbrecht, portrait of count Johann Baroniay as hussar commander, print, around 1740, inv. no. HB 23927,115, Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg; Martin Engelbrecht, portrait of count Nádašdy as hussar commander, print, around 1740, inv. no. HB 23927,109, Germanisches National Museum, Nuremberg; Martin van Meytens, portrait of count Alexander Károlyi, painting, before 1743, private collections.

therefore be understood in this context as a military commander–noble. However, such a depiction does not correspond to the biography of St. Martin, as he did not come from a noble family and was not a commander during his military service.

The probable iconographic model for the Bratislava sculptural group of St. Martin and the beggar were two paintings of St. Martin and the beggar by Anthony van Dyck. This iconographic type subsequently received many copies, which also appeared in Central Europe. Sculptures of St. Martin and the beggar from southern Germany may also have served as inspiration for the composition. These findings refuted the assumption that St. Martin and the beggar was compositionally and iconographically

based on the iconography of St. George and the dragon, as well as many analyses that have sought significance in elements previously considered atypical: a composition with a beggar at the front feet of a horse, a muscular beggar in a loincloth, a strip of cloth around his head, or a beggar proportionally corresponding to the size of St. Martin. We have also proved that the style of the sculpture fits into the work of Georg Raphael Donner to the extent that we cannot look for specific meanings in the “stylistic” elements of the sculpture (e.g., in the “classical” muscular beggar or the angels). Another finding is that St. Martin is dressed as a military commander–noble, which represents an anomaly in the iconography of St. Martin.

The Iconography of the Former Main Altar of St. Martin by Georg Raphael Donner in St. Martin’s Cathedral in Bratislava

Résumé

This article aims to analyse the probable iconographic models for the Bratislava sculptural group, the iconographic type of St. Martin on horseback and the beggar in the context of the researched work of art, and the atypical elements of the sculptural group, in which authors have searched for specific meanings to this day. The probable iconographic model for the Bratislava sculptural group were two paintings of St. Martin and the beggar by Anthony van Dyck. This iconographic type subsequently received many copies, especially by Karel Škréta and Pieter Soutman. Sculptures of St. Martin and the beggar from southern Germany may also have inspired the composition. These findings refuted the assumption that St. Martin and the beggar were compositionally and iconographically based on the iconography of St. George and the dragon or equestrian monuments,

as well as many analyses that have sought significance in elements previously considered atypical. We have also proved that the style of the sculpture fits into the work of Georg Raphael Donner to the extent that we cannot look for specific meanings in the “stylistic” elements of the sculpture (e.g., in the “classical” muscular beggar or the angels). Another finding is that St. Martin is dressed as a military commander–noble, representing an anomaly in the iconography of St. Martin. Additionally, instead of sitting on a saddle, St. Martin is seated on a lion’s skin with distinctive lion paws in front of and behind the saint’s leg. This important and hitherto overlooked detail will need to be examined iconologically. The article also demonstrated that the sculptural group of St. Martin must be analysed in the context of the altar to be interpreted.

Mgr. Katarína Orviská

Centrum vied o umení SAV, v.v.i.

org. zložka Ústav dejín umenia

Dúbravská cesta 9, SK-841 04 Bratislava

e-mail: katarina.orviska@pobox.sk