

THE WALL PAINTINGS IN THE CHURCH OF ST CANTIANUS IN VRZDENEC, SLOVENIA

PAST CONSERVATION-RESTORATION INTERVENTIONS, CONSERVATION CHALLENGES, INTERPRETATION AND EVALUATION

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INTRODUCTION

The frescoes in the church of St Cantianus in Vrzdeneč are somewhat of an ‘icon’ of Slovenian medieval painting. At the time of their discovery, they were considered to be some of the oldest paintings in Slovenia, which is why the leading Slovene conservator and art historian France Stele devoted a considerable amount of attention to them (both at the time of their discovery in 1925 and subsequently later) in articles on and art-historical surveys of Slovenian medieval painting. He declared the uncovering of all three cycles of the Vrzdeneč frescoes the greatest post-war effort of the then Heritage Protection Office (Spomeniški urad).¹ This important discovery also reverberated more widely, since it was published in the national newspaper of the time.² At the same time, the frescoes in Vrzdeneč symbolise the development of conservation-restoration and protection of cultural heritage in Slovenia over a century, as they have undergone numerous interventions since their discovery in 1925. The detachment of the wall paintings in the nave, the transfer of the fragments to different locations and institutions, the creation of a copy of St Christopher on the façade, the reconstruction of the Gothic windows, the discovery and restoration of the paintings in the chancel – these are the interventions that have crucially shaped the present state of the monument and its wall paintings.

¹ STELE 1928, p. 117.

² The uncovering of the paintings was published in: Varujmo 1926; Iz Vrzdence 1925; Dnevne vesti 1925, where the Art-Historical Society invites on a trip to Vrzdeneč to see the newly uncovered paintings.

The Vrzenec case and its complexity opens up many ethical, aesthetic, documentary and art-historical questions, dilemmas and challenges which are interesting and relevant for restorers and art historians, art connoisseurs and the general public alike. As an aesthetic presentation of the paintings is very strongly connected with their perception and evaluation, I would like to discuss three main issues. First, how does restoration alter and affect the final presentation of the wall paintings? Second, and critically, are the experts and the general public aware of its effects? Without being able to identify and interpret past interventions, the viewer's perception, understanding or interpretations may be mistaken. Third – a question primarily for restorers – what kind of artistic reintegration is appropriate for the frescoes in order to respect their aesthetic, documentary and art-historical value? In Vrzenec these interventions were so fundamental that they altered the image of the monument and at the same time erased the original condition and extent of the paintings.

I will discuss the paintings and past interventions as a conservator-restorer, since I led and carried out the uncovering and restoration of the paintings in the chancel between 2006 and 2017. During the conservation-restoration work, I encountered the problem of the impact past interventions up closely and in a very tangible way. This article, thus, presents my observations, reflections and evaluations.

THE CHURCH OF ST CANTIANUS AND ITS GOTHIC WALL PAINTINGS³

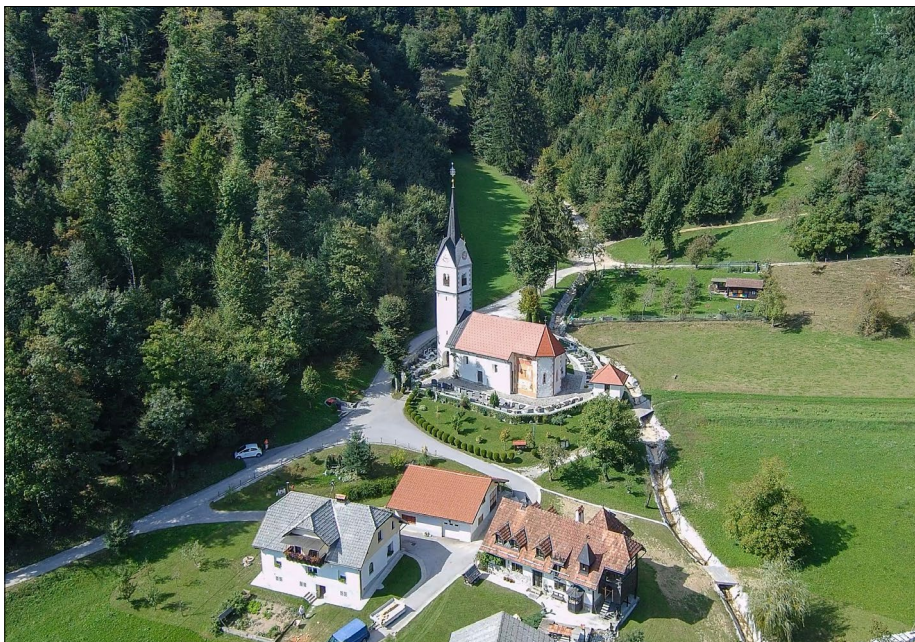
In order to be able to understand the issue in the round, let me first briefly present the history of the church and the paintings in it.⁴ The church of St Cantianus stands in sheltered and slightly



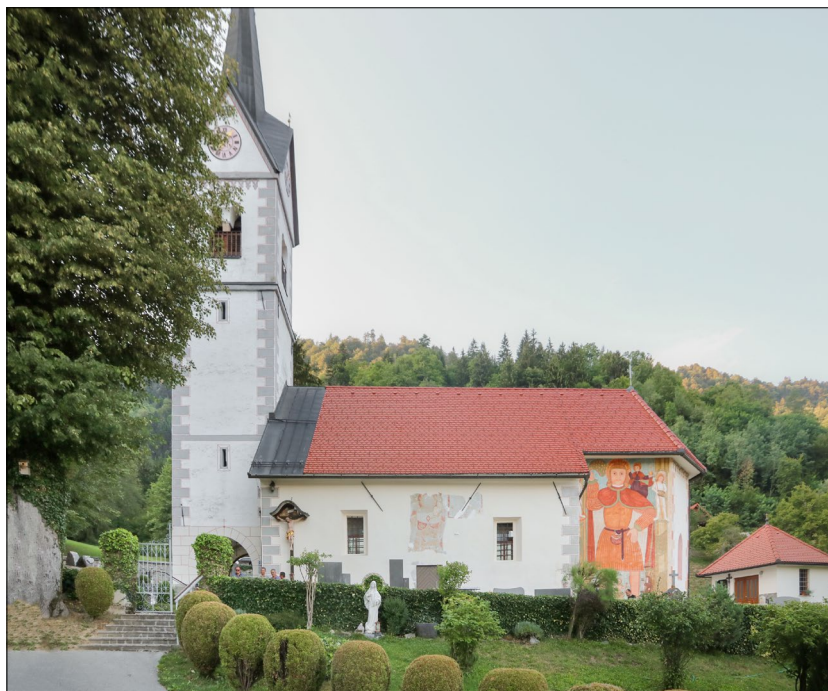
1. Retouching St Joseph's face from the Birth of Christ on the northern wall of the chancel, the work of Master Leonard from the beginning of the 16th century (© Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Restoration Centre, Ljubljana (IPCHS, RC), photo: Anita Klančar Kavčič, 2017)

³ The history of the church building and the description of the paintings are summarised according to HÖFLER 2001, pp. 219–224.

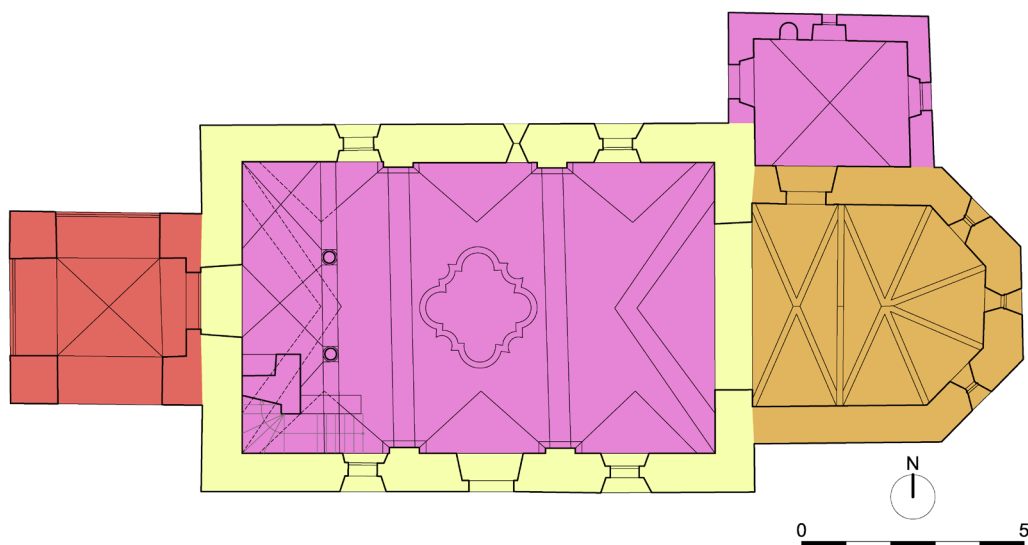
⁴ The description of iconography has been omitted since we are providing basic information on the history of the church and its wall paintings.



2. Church of St Cantianus in Vrzenec (Photo: David Mrvar, 2021)



3. The exterior of the church after conservation-restoration interventions and the renovation of the façade (Photo: Vid Klančar, 2022)



4. Floor plan of the church with colour scheme to show historical renovations: yellow – the Romanesque nave, orange – the Gothic chancel, red – the bell tower from the 16th century, pink – the arched ceiling of the nave and a vestry from the 18th and 19th century (floor plan: © Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, France Stele Institute of Art History, Ljubljana (ZRC SAZU, UIFS), Nejc Bernik; colour scheme: Vid Klančar, 2022).

elevated position, at a remove from the settlement of Vrzdenc. Around the church there is a walled cemetery next to the course of a stream. The back of the church on the northern side is sheltered and overlooks steep wooded hills. The church is mentioned for the first time only in 1526, but its Romanesque nave suggests an older origin. According to archival data, a Romanesque ossuary once stood here, and in the wall of the chancel there was a tabernacle cabinet, which means that in the Middle Ages the church was not an ordinary succursal church, but probably already had a permanent priest.

The nave and its Romanesque walls were first painted in the first half of the 14th century. Less than a century later, around 1400, the older painting was covered by Friulian painters (or paintings). In the first half of the 15th century, the church acquired a Gothic chancel, where once there had been a Romanesque apse. The chancel was painted about a hundred years later, at the beginning of the 16th century, by Master Leonard. Three interior cycles are complemented by two representations of St Christopher on the southern exterior walls of the chancel and nave. The first originates in the 15th century and coincides with the younger (Friulian) layer of the nave paintings. The second dates to the second half of the 16th century.⁵ It was then that the western nave wall was joined by a belfry, which was decorated with paintings in the middle of the 17th century,

⁵ This fresco has been replaced by a copy. The original has been on display in the chapel of rest since 2019.

along with the rest of the church exterior.⁶ In the 18th and 19th centuries, the nave was arched, and a vestry added, and a reconstruction of the windows in the nave and the chancel probably took place, which partially damaged and destroyed the Gothic paintings.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF PAST CONSERVATION-RESTORATION INTERVENTIONS

During the Gothic period, the church was painted as many as four times, which is why it is deemed one of the most important monuments of medieval art in Slovenia. Perhaps not surprisingly given the church's art-historical significance, the wall paintings have been the subject of extensive conservation and restoration work for very nearly a century, from their discovery to the present day. These works include the uncovering of the paintings, the detachment of fragments and their dislocation/transfer, the repeated restoration of the paintings inside the church, the reconstruction of Gothic windows, the transfer of a monumental painting from the façade to the chapel of rest and its reconstruction. These are the critical interventions that have together shaped the present state of the wall paintings, altered their presentation, perception and context, which in turn affects the substantive, aesthetic and spiritual interpretation and evaluation of the works of art. The following is a brief overview of past conservation and restoration interventions:

1925/26: Uncovering of two layers of Gothic paintings in the church nave, detachment of fragments of the upper, younger layer, restoration of the lower, older layer, partial uncovering and partial restoration of the chancel wall paintings (France Stele, Matej Sternen, Heritage Protection Office).⁷

1958: Restoration of the detached younger fresco with a negative print of the older one. A restorer separated the negative from the younger painting (Emil Pohl, IPCHS).⁸

1968: Restoration of the St Christopher fresco on the southern façade of the chancel (Miha Pirnat IPCHS, RC).⁹

1997: Probing of the façade (Rado Zoubek, IPCHS, RC).

2000: Preliminary protection of the deteriorating St Christopher fresco on the southern façade of the chancel (Rado Zoubek, IPCHS, RC). Analysis, photogrammetry, computer simulated reconstruction of the wall painting. The expert committee agrees that the fresco

⁶ Rustication and hemmed edges, the year 1658 is inscribed on the belfry.

⁷ STELE 1925, pp. 183–185.

⁸ ŽELEZNIK 1960, pp. 76–79.

⁹ PIRNAT 1970, p. 248.

should be detached and treated in an atelier for museum presentation; a copy is to be made on the façade.¹⁰

2003: Detaching of the St Christopher fresco and production of a copy in situ. Temporary treatment of the detached fresco in an atelier (Rado Zoubek, IPCHS, RC).¹¹

2004: Interventions on the church exterior: conservation and retouching of the decorative parts and fragments of the wall paintings; partial reconstruction of the Gothic windows in the chancel, refilling and reconstruction of the damaged ribs and consoles (Martina Kikelj, IPCHS, RC).¹²

2006–2017: Uncovering and restoration of the chancel wall paintings (Anita Klančar Kavčič, IPCHS, RC).¹³

2009–2011: Identification and conservation of small detached fragments of the Friulian paintings from the nave (Anabelle Križnar, Department of Art History, Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, Professor Blaž Šeme with his students, Academy of Fine Arts and Design in Ljubljana, Department for Restoration).¹⁴

2015: Re-conservation of the detached fragment of the Friulian paintings from the nave (the Procession and Adoration of the Magi), now exhibited at the National Gallery in Ljubljana (Jelka Kuret, IPCHS, RC).¹⁵



5. Matej Sternen and France Stele during the detachment of the younger layer in the nave in 1925 (© Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, Heritage Information and Documentation Centre, Ljubljana (INDOC Centre), photolibrary)

¹⁰ ZOUBEK 2002, pp. 4–20.

¹¹ ZOUBEK 2017, pp. 280–282.

¹² KIKELJ LESAR 2004.

¹³ KLANČAR KAVČIČ 2021, pp. 67–70.

¹⁴ KRIŽNAR, ŠEME 2011.

¹⁵ URBANC, KURET 2017, pp. 279–280.



6. The younger and detached layer is marked orange, the rest is an older painting
(© INDOC Centre, photolibrary)

2019: Reassembling and placement of the detached conserved St Christopher fresco inside the Vrzenec chapel of rest (Rado Zoubek, IPCHS, RC).¹⁶

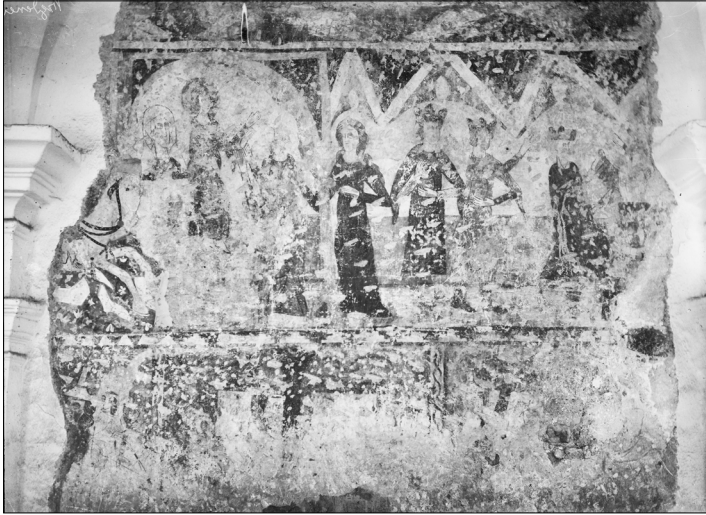
In the following section, the various wall paintings and their conservation-restoration interventions are presented and the dilemmas, different viewpoints, debates and questions associated with the conservation and restoration work are discussed.

PAST CONSERVATION-RESTORATION INTERVENTIONS ON THE WALL PAINTINGS IN THE NAVE

Two layers of the Gothic paintings were discovered by the conservator France Stele and the restorer Matej Sternen in 1925.¹⁷ The discovery was important, since the lower older layer was then regarded as the oldest wall painting in the territory of Slovenia. Due to its status, they decided to detach the upper younger layer. This led to the first documented detachment of wall paintings in

¹⁶ ZOUBEK 2019.

¹⁷ Matej Sternen, better known as an Impressionist, was one of the first restorers who worked according to the modern principles of conservation-restoration. As a restorer, he worked closely with France Stele.



7. Southern wall after detachment of the younger layer and before restoration of the older one, 1925. There is visible damage in the plaster and on the paint layer (© INDOC Centre, photolibrary)



8. The present state of the wall painting on the southern wall after Sternens's intervention in 1925. Sternens puttied damaged area using mortar and then retouched missing parts of the paint layer (© IPCHS, RC, photo: Tine Benedik, 2013)

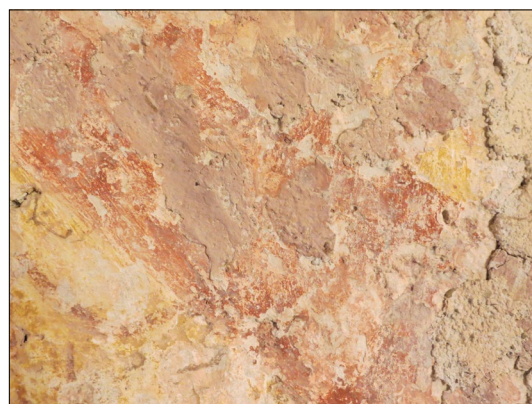
our lands.¹⁸ The detachment was a major technical, aesthetic as well as substantive intervention on the frescoes, which today would not be carried out. At the time, it was considered a technical innovation and was also considered justified in order to uncover and present the lower, older layer of the painting.¹⁹

¹⁸ ŽELEZNIK 1960, p. 75.

¹⁹ STELE 1925, p. 184.

THE LOWER, OLDER LAYER OF THE PAINTINGS IN THE NAVE

After the detachment of the younger layer, Matej Sternen restored the older one, which remained in the church. He treated the damaged parts of the plaster by filling them in with lime mortar, taking no particular care to seal off the edges of the fillings, so the rough surface of the fillings differs from the original surrounding plaster. If we examine his work, we cannot help but feel that it was done quickly and with a kind of ‘impressionistic’ painting approach. Quick brushstrokes and quick, somewhat superficial plaster applications are visible. His interventions do not enhance the paintings, he merely preserved the appearance of a damaged painting as a result. He left some fillings uncoloured, while overpainting others. He did the smaller ones in *tempera a secco* and the larger ones *in fresco* on freshly applied plaster. As early as 1925 he used the so-called *tratteggio* retouch but in very simplified way so the viewer could discern the difference between the original and the additions. Conservator France Stele wrote that ‘the missing areas in the paintings were retouched using the technique of hatching to not insult the viewer, and yet are still clearly discernible to the expert as an addition.’²⁰ The first use of so called *tratteggio* technique is mentioned also by Stele in 1965,²¹ where he writes that Cesare Brandi started using that technique only after the Second World War.²²



9.–10. Sternen filled losses in the plaster with lime mortar, taking no particular care to seal off the edges of the fillings, and so the rough surface of the fillings differs from the original surrounding plaster. He left some fillings uncoloured (left), while overpainting others (© IPCHS, RC, photos: Anita Klančar Kavčič, 2017)

²⁰ STELE 1925, p. 184; translated by Tanja Dolinar.

²¹ STELE 1965, p. 29.

²² Cesare Brandi was a leading Italian art critic and historian, an expert on conservation-restoration theory. Based on his theories, the *tratteggio* method was developed at the Istituto Centrale del Restauro by his students Paul Phillipot, Paulo and Laura Mora between 1945 and 1950.



11.–12. As early as 1925 Sternén used the hatching retouching technique, so the viewer could see the difference between the original and the additions (Photos: Vid Klančar, 2021, 2017)



13. The present state of the wall paintings after Sternén's interventions, southern wall of the nave (Photo: Vid Klančar, 2022)



14. Wall painting with digital highlighting of Sternén's interventions. Green marks the puttyed areas, which were later retouched, orange marks the areas with Sternén's inpainting on the original plaster, on areas of the abraded paint layer (Photo and graphic editing: Vid Klančar and Anita Klančar Kavčič, 2022)



15.–16. Photographs taken in raking light and with Sternens interventions marked to illustrate how little of Christ's face is in fact preserved. A large part of painting was puttied and then repainted
(Photos and graphic editing: Vid Klančar and Anita Klančar Kavčič, 2022)

All Sternens interventions were compatible with the painting since he had used inorganic materials, such as lime, sand and pigments. In areas of lesser damage, he retouched using reversible and removeable tempera, while using fresco technique on freshly applied plaster in areas of greater damage.

Nowadays, we understand that Sternens interventions, in accordance with Steles doctrine on the establishment and recognition of Slovene medieval painting, were mostly intended for uncovering. The procedures that followed the uncovering were mainly carried out as urgent protective measures. In this way, they stopped the deterioration of the paintings, and the retouching they

enabled the motifs to be recognised. Two things that are important for the development of contemporary restoration should be emphasised: Sternens used compatible materials and a distinguishing retouch that enables the viewer to distinguish it from the original. Even today, we strive for such a principle, but after hundreds of years, we have established different standards, which Sternens could not have imagined or have been able to implement given the large number and wide range of uncovered and restored frescoes he had to work on. The state of these paintings has remained basically unchanged since the 1925 restoration, therefore the paintings also represent a historical example of conservation and retouching practice.

THE UPPER, YOUNGER LAYER OF THE PAINTINGS IN THE NAVE

Nine fragments of the younger painting were detached in 1925, leaving only two in the church. The detached fragments ended up at various locations and institutions in the next decades. To explain the situation, we use the restorer Anja Urbanc's digital schematic reconstruction.²³

As noted above, the first two fragments remained in the church. The next two were restored and are displayed in the permanent exhibition of the National Gallery. Two fragments are in the National Gallery depot. The one on the right was restored in 1958, when the two layers were separated. The other one has not undergone any restoration after Sternens's provisional interventions. Two fragments are kept by the Faculty of Arts at the Department of Art History. They were restored between 2009 and 2011 by the Department of Wall Paintings of the Academy of Fine Arts and Design. One fragment is kept and presented at the Restoration Centre. The last two fragments are considered lost. Since the bottom left fragment never later reappeared, we assume it was not successfully detached. Perhaps the upper has, due to its attractiveness and size, ended up in somebody's home? The question remains unanswered.

Nine fragments are currently stored at six different places. It is worth mentioning that these fragments have been differently restored over different periods, using different materials, frames, pigments and so on, with the result that there is no unified, systematic restoration. What value do these fragments then hold and for whom? Or – as our colleague Alberto Felici put it – who do the frescoes belong to: to the church, the institutions, conservators, art curators, general public, art historians? Can all these institutions understand the need for a common interpretive thread, conservation strategy and indeed home for these fragments? They call for order, systematization, a common source, maybe for a return to where they came from. An interesting digitalisation project for the detached wall paintings has emerged, developed by Anja Urbanc. Many articles have been written on the restoration of the Vrzdenc frescoes. We are considering a symbolic return of

²³ URBANC 2018.



17. A digital reconstruction of the detached fragments of the younger layer (Digital scheme: Anja Urbanc, 2008)



18. When Sternen detached a fragment of the younger layer (1a), a paint layer of the older painting (1b) imprinted on its back. In 1958 restorer Emil Pohl successfully separated both layers. The upper part with heads (2) is a complete reconstruction by Sternen. Moreover, the detached fresco, now in the National Gallery, is presented in mirror image (Photos and colour scheme: Vid Klančar, 2022)

one of the restored fragments to the church as well as a continuous programme of writing, raising awareness and publicity about the church and its works of art. Digitalising or producing a copy of the detached fragments are also possible solutions. These are some of the outstanding questions and challenges we face as experts and institutions.

WALL PAINTINGS IN THE CHANCEL

The wall paintings in the chancel were partially uncovered and restored by Matej Sternen between 1925 and 1926.²⁴ He left parts of the paintings behind the altar under the whitewash, as they were harder to reach. He also left the paintings on the chancel ceiling uncovered. Because they were pressed for time, the wall paintings were imprecisely and sloppily uncovered. Several whitewash fragments remained on the surface of the painting, and during the retouch Sternen simply painted over them. Fortunately, he used reversible and water-soluble tempera for smaller inpaintings and overpaintings. He used coarse lime mortar to putty the larger damaged areas before reconstructing the missing parts of the painting using the fresco technique. The condition of the paintings after Sternen's restoration did not change until 2004.

In 2004, a major intervention was carried out in the chancel.²⁵ It affected both its interior and exterior. Gothic windows replaced the former Baroque windows which had been part of the chancel since the rebuilding of the church in the 18th century. A committee of experts also stipulated in 2004 that, based on the preserved Gothic openings, a reconstruction of Gothic windows should be carried out.

Between 2006 and 2017 a final uncovering and restoration of the wall paintings in the chancel was undertaken.²⁶ In 2006, first the ceiling paintings of the chancel were uncovered and restored, then we began intervening on the wall paintings, encountering the problem of preserving and presenting the past interventions. During our work, we came across a painted built-in niche from 1632 that we decided to restore and present. We have also preserved, restored and presented the original (decoratively painted) plasters from the time when the chancel was built. During the restoration, we faced the problem of preserving Sternen's interventions from 1925/26. We removed some of his interventions for technical reasons: his paint layer was smudged and water-soluble and the plaster unstable, partly brittle and coming off. At the same time, some of the interventions were also aesthetically and art historically obtrusive because in parts they covered the original Gothic painting and substituted it with unsuitable inpainting. But in some cases, the Gothic painting under Sternen's inpaintings was so poorly preserved that the removal of the latter would cause the motif to be undecipherable. Which is why we compromised, keeping these inpaintings on the wall.

During our interventions, some of Sternen's unstable plaster was replaced with new plaster, on which a reconstruction of the painting was carried out. Today, instead of a reconstruction,

²⁴ On 23 August 1926, the conservator France Stele issued a short, handwritten note on the restoration of the frescoes in the chancel for the Heritage Protection Office in Ljubljana in which he stated that the painter Sternen completed the uncovering and restoration of the said frescoes in the past two years.

²⁵ The restoration was carried out by the IPCHS, RC, and the project manager Martina Kikelj.

²⁶ Uncovering and restoration of the chancel wall paintings was carried out by the Restoration Center, project was managed by Anita Klančar Kavčič, IPCHS, RC.



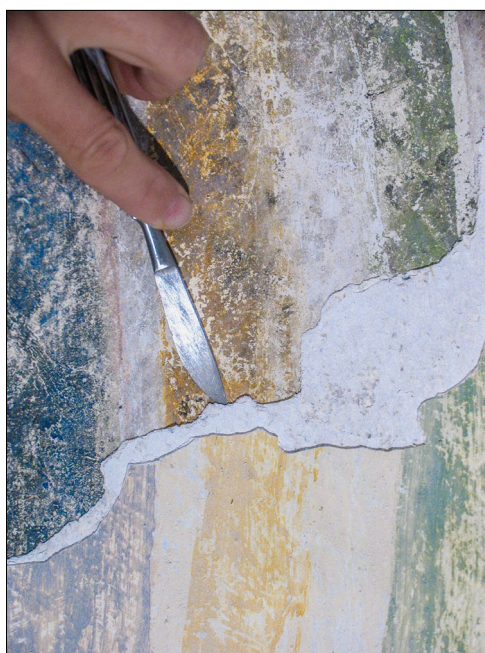
19.–20. Photo of the chancel in 2006 shows that Sternen (in 1925/26) uncovered only the paintings on the walls. The paintings on the ceiling were uncovered and restored between 2006 and 2017 (© IPCHS, RC, photos: Anita Klančar Kavčič)

we would have probably only made a neutrally toned plaster, but at that time the owner's expectations were taken into account. The complex situation of the chancel poses several dilemmas concerning the preservation and presentation of the past interventions. Today, the new findings would require rather different solutions.

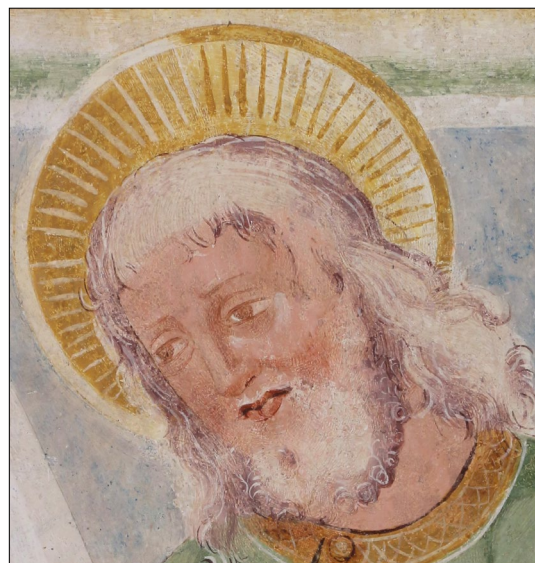
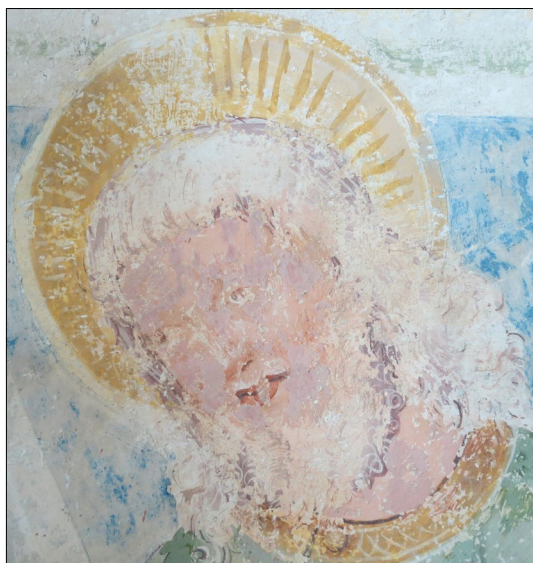
After the interventions in the chancel, a photo brochure of the wall paintings was made (Fig. 28). It marks the historical alterations and reconstructions, and displays the current presentation of the chancel paintings.



21.–22. In 2004, the reconstruction of the Gothic windows was carried out in the chancel. This intervention affected both the interior and exterior (Photos: Martina Lesar Kikelj)



23.–24. Removing Stern's infillings and inpaintings which covered the Gothic painting. They were removed for technical and aesthetic reasons (© IPCHS, RC, photos: Anita Klančar Kavčič, 2014, 2006)



25.-26. Detail of the painting after Stern's interventions (from 1926, photographed in 2014) and after the last interventions in 2017. Stern's paintings were partially removed, retouching was carried out on the damaged areas (© IPCHS, RC, photos: Anita Klančar Kavčič)



27. Ceiling of the chancel after the uncovering and restoration in 2017 (© IPCHS, RC, photo: Anita Klančar Kavčič)



- The original plaster with the fragmented wall painting from the first half of the 15th century
- The painted niche of 1632
- The former Baroque windows
- The damage on Gothic wall paintings caused by installation of Baroque windows
- Reconstruction of the Gothic windows (2004)

28. Orthophoto of the wall paintings in the chancel after the last conservation-restoration treatment in 2017. Past historical interventions are marked in different colours (Photo and graphic editing: Vid Klančar, 2020)

WALL PAINTINGS ON THE SOUTHERN FAÇADE OF THE CHURCH

The final, fourth section of this article concerns the paintings on the southern exterior walls of the church. The detachment of the monumental painting of St Christopher was a major procedure endorsed by an expert committee of art historians, conservators, restorers, and locals due to the poor condition of the painting. Based on archival photos and the remains of the painting, a copy in fresco technique was made in 2004. The original was conserved and returned to the newly built chapel of rest in Vrzdenc in three transferable pieces. The detachment of the painting, production of a copy, placement of the detached painting in the chapel of rest are all again major substantive, technical and aesthetic interventions. Changing the location also means changing the meaning and context. The monumental painting of St Christopher usually appeared on façades along the road so anyone passing by could see him – be it travellers, worshippers, the ill. It was also believed that any ill person who sees St Christopher, lives to see another day. But it is questionable whether there could be any other, better solution for this painting. In the worst-case scenario, the detached painting would end up in a depot.

Which Christopher is more authentic? The damaged original painting before detachment, the copy of Christopher on the facade or the detached and restored painting in the chapel of rest?



29. Exterior of the chancel with the original, poorly preserved painting of St Christopher and the Baroque window
(© IPCHS, RC, photo: Valentin Benedik, 2001)



30. Exterior of the chancel after a copy was made of the monumental painting of St Christopher and after the reconstruction of the Gothic windows
(Photo: Vid Klančar, 2008)



31. The detached and restored painting in the chapel of rest (Photo: Vid Klančar, 2022)



32. An example of retouching by tonal adjustment on the Gothic wall paintings in the church of St Judoc in Šentjošt. It is very minimal retouching, that pushes the damaged areas into the visual background (Photo: Vid Klančar, 2021)

CONCLUSION

The past Vrzenec interventions discussed here are rather radical and aggressive from a present-day perspective. However, they need to be understood in context, as society's attitude towards heritage preservation changes over time. By studying, systematizing, examining and evaluating the past interventions much can be learned, which can in turn provide insights into how to proceed with current and future conservation and restoration work.

This overview of the past practice and exchange of opinions between restorers, conservators, art historians as well as the general public leaves many open questions. To find answers, a special Work Group for Protection of Wall Paintings has been established by the IPCHS,²⁷ which organises symposia and workshops pertaining to the topic.²⁸

In 2020, an international workshop on retouching was held at the church of St Judoc in Šentjošt, where we practiced the esthetic reintegration (retouches and infillings), which is more respectful of the authenticity and documentary value of the artwork.²⁹

²⁷ The Working Group for the Protection and Preservation of Wall Paintings was officially designated in 2018.

²⁸ Already before 2018, the same group of art-historian conservators and conservator-restorers organized two symposia under the auspices of the IPCHS and the Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration. *Retouching and the Issues of Wall Painting Presentation* was held on 27 Oct 2016 in Škofja Loka, while the second international symposium with title *The Aesthetic Presentation of Wall Paintings – Problems and Solutions*, took place on 3 and 4 Oct 2017 at the Slovenian National Gallery in Ljubljana. Following these two symposia, a monograph *The Presentation of Wall Paintings – Views, Concepts, and Approaches* was published by IPCHS, Restoration Centre.

²⁹ The international workshop *Retouching on wall paintings. Methodological approaches, techniques and materials* was organized in 2020 by the Working Group for the Protection and Preservation of Wall Paintings, IPCHS and

Meetings, talks, symposia, and workshops led us to be more sensitive and cautious during interventions. Restorers, conservators and art historians alike are probably insufficiently aware that all interventions, from uncovering, cleaning, consolidation, plastering to retouching, are not only technical but also visual. That is why we focus on more restrained, analytical, systematic and interdisciplinary approaches, which should enable us to establish and maintain best practice in the art-historical and documentary presentation of our wall paintings.

the Slovenian Society for Conservation-Restoration. In addition to presenting and debating the theoretical basis and historical examples of retouching, the workshop also included practical work sessions, including puttying and retouching on the Gothic wall paintings in the church of St Judoc in Šentjošt. The workshop was led by internationally renowned conservator-restorer Professor Alberto Felici from Florence.

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Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia, Restoration Centre, Ljubljana, photolibrary.
Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, Heritage Information and Documentation Centre, Ljubljana, photolibrary.

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**STENSKÉ POSLIKAVE V CERKVI SVETEGA KANCIJANA NA VRZDENCU
IZVEDENI KONSERVATORSKO-RESTAVRATORSKI POSEGI, KONSERVATORSKI IZZIVI,
INTERPRETACIJA IN VREDNOTENJE**

Povzetek

Cerkev sv. Kancijana na Vrzdencu se s štirimi cikli gotskih poslikav uvršča med pomembnejše spomenike srednjeveškega stenskega slikarstva v Sloveniji. Vse od odkritja poslikav leta 1925 pa do danes so se na njih zvrstili številni konservatorsko-restavratorski posegi, ki so vplivali na njihovo današnje stanje in izgled. Obseg odkritih poslikav, način obdelave ometa na poškodbah, izvedba retuš in doslikav, izvedba kopije in rekonstrukcije ter snemanje poslikav, njihova dislokacija in s tem sprememba njihovega konteksta so posegi, ki so stoletje sooblikovali končno prezentacijo in posledično percepcijo vrzdenških poslikav.

Interpretacijski, metodološki, tehnološki in prezentacijski modeli pristopov konserviranja in restavriranja so se skozi zgodovino restavratorstva razvijali in spreminjali. Sodobno konservatorstvo in restavratorstvo skušata vzpostaviti kritičen in analitičen odnos tako do preteklih kot do sodobnih posegov. Vrzenec kot primer raznolikih preteklih konservatorsko-restavratorskih praks in pristopov poziva konservatorje in restavratorje k bolj preišljenim, analitičnim in zadržanim pristopom, ki stremijo k ohranjanju avtentičnosti umetnine in omogočajo jasno razločevanje med izvornikom in dodanim. V tej smeri je bila leta 2020 v organizaciji Delovne skupine za stenske slike in Zavoda za varstvo kulturne dediščine Slovenije izvedena mednarodna delavnica o retušah, ki s primeri estetske integracije predstavlja nova strokovna izhodišča in rešitve za nadaljnje delo na stenskih poslikavah.