

IMAGES, LITURGY AND ILLUSIONISM

LATE GOTHIC WALL PAINTINGS IMITATING WINGED ALTARPIECES

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In the study of late medieval church interiors, it is frequently observed that the medium of wall painting was commonly used in the decoration of altars: often, although not exclusively, in the case of side altars in smaller village churches.¹ The medium was also regularly employed in this period, as any scholar of late medieval wall painting will know, to imitate through illusionistic means three-dimensional objects: primarily architectural elements, but also pieces of liturgical furnishings such as sacrament houses² or liturgical niches,³ as an eye-catching and cost-effective way of visually highlighting significant parts of a church interior.

At the intersection of these two phenomena stand wall painting compositions which imitate three-dimensional forms of altar decoration, such as a wall painting in the chapel of St Faith in Westminster Abbey (c. 1300) combining a horizontal panel retable with an imitation statue of the titular saint in a tabernacle shrine,⁴ or the composition by Lippo Vanni in the church of San

¹ On wall paintings serving as altar decoration, see BRAUN 1924, pp. 530–534; MICHLER 1990, pp. 101–106; FUCHSS 1999, pp. 26–29, 154–165, 168–169, 176–180, 191–196, 198–203; HAASTRUP 2004; KROESEN 2010b, pp. 44–51, 63–64, 86–91, 100–103, 115–116, 133–135; KROESEN, STEENSMA 2012, pp. 66, 68; KROESEN 2014, pp. 164–167; KÓNYA 2022 (with references to earlier literature focusing on the territory of medieval Hungary).

² As, for example, several spectacular wall painting compositions enlarging a more modest sacrament niche into a monumental illusionistic sacrament house in the regions of Tyrol, Carinthia, Styria and Salzburg; see TIMMERMANN 2009, pp. 215–219. In the territory of medieval Hungary, the illusionistic wall painting decoration of the sacrament niches in Spišská Sobota (*Szepesszombat*) and Strážky (*Nagyőr*, both today in Slovakia) are cases in point; see DVOŘÁKOVÁ, KRÁSA, STEJSKAL 1978, pp. 143, 145–146.

³ Examples can be found in the decoration of the Baroncelli chapel by Tadeo Gaddi in the Santa Croce in Florence (c. 1328–1330), on the southern chancel wall of the parish church in Velemér (Hungary), painted by Johannes Aquila in 1377–1378, and in St Stephen's chapel in Morter, South Tyrol. Of the two illusionistic niches painted on the western wall of the Smíšek chapel in the St Barbara church in Kutná Hora, one is captured in a half-open state, creating the illusion of a moveable door; see JÉKELY 2004, p. 114; KROESEN 2010a, p. 245; BOKODY 2015, p. 42.

⁴ MICHLER 1990, pp. 103–104; FUCHSS 1999, pp. 168–169; WILLIAMSON 2004, pp. 365–367.

Francesco in Siena (c. 1360–1370) faithfully imitating the characteristic structure and iconographic scheme of Italian polyptychs of the period.⁵

This paper focuses on wall paintings imitating winged altarpieces, which have not yet been studied as a group before. While examples from medieval Transylvania⁶ provide the starting point for the analysis, I examine them in the wider context of comparable works of art from Central Europe. After presenting an overview of the surviving Transylvanian examples of wall painting compositions inspired by the medium of winged altarpieces,⁷ I provide in the second part of the paper a brief survey of analogues from other parts of the medieval Kingdom of Hungary as well as from South Tyrol, Styria, Lower Austria and Bavaria. In the third part of the paper, I look at general patterns in wall painting representations of winged altarpieces in terms of connections between their form, iconography, and function. The main questions driving my analysis are how the three-dimensional format of winged altarpieces was transposed and adapted into the medium of wall painting and what the possibilities and limitations of this adaptation were.

WALL PAINTING COMPOSITIONS IMITATING WINGED ALTARPIECES IN TRANSYLVANIA

In the town of Mediaş (*Medgyes* in Hungarian), the chapel of the so-called Tower of Mary located to the south-east of the parish church was decorated around 1450–1460 with a coherent figural program embedded in a framework of *grisaille* architectural elements (Figs. 1–2).⁸ On the eastern wall, the representation of an open triptych can be seen, which used to serve as decoration for the altar that once stood against the wall, with a rectangular lacuna in the plaster below the illusionistic altarpiece suggesting the position of the altar. In the central panel of the triptych, the figure of God the Father can be seen, holding the lifeless body of Christ in front of him by his chest. On the right wing of the altarpiece, St John the Baptist is depicted, holding in his left hand a white disk, on which a fragmentary representation of the Agnus Dei with a flag can be discerned and at which he is pointing with his right hand.

⁵ SÖDING 2010, p. 153, with further bibliography.

⁶ Medieval Transylvania is understood here as a historical region today in Romania that formed the easternmost part of the Hungarian Kingdom in the Middle Ages.

⁷ A recently revealed fragmentary wall painting in Fântânele (*Gyulakuta*) came to my attention after the submission of this manuscript. The composition painted on the southern side of the chancel arch, facing the nave, consists of a rectangular panel featuring figures of standing saints (possibly Sts Cosmas and Damian) topped by an ogee-arched panel in the superstructure, with the representation of the Man of Sorrows standing in his tomb with the arma Christi. I thank art historian Attila Weisz and restorer Lóránd Kiss for drawing my attention to this example and providing photos of the wall painting.

⁸ FABRITIUS 2006, pp. 41–44; JENEI 2012, pp. 54–57, with references to the earlier literature.



1. *Mediás (Medgyes, Mediasch)*, the wall painting decoration of the eastern wall of the chapel in the so-called Tower of Mary, c. 1450–1460 (Photo: Anna Kónya)



2. *Mediás (Medgyes, Mediasch)*, imitation triptych on the eastern wall of the chapel, c. 1450–1460 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

Of the pendant figure on the left wing only fragments of a long dress reaching the ground survive in the lower part of the panel. This figure was most probably the Virgin Mary,⁹ who would have been an obvious pendant to St John the Baptist, as in an analogous representation of the so-called *Notgottes* or Trinity Pietà in the central panel of the former high altarpiece of the Spitalkirche in Weilheim, Bavaria (c. 1470–1480).¹⁰ Further, on the basis of analogues with representations of the related theme of the Throne of Mercy flanked by the figures of the Madonna and St John the Baptist,¹¹ it is plausible that the Virgin Mary was depicted here with the child Christ in her arms.¹²

The spatial relationship of the wall painting retable to the altar was more flexible than would have been expected in the case of a three-dimensional altarpiece. Presuming that the placement and the size of the medieval altar coincided with the lacuna visible today, the mural altarpiece was not attached to the altar mensa, but positioned somewhat above it, nor was it vertically aligned with the altar block (which was placed slightly to the left compared to the central axis of the eastern wall); the painter thus seems to have aimed for symmetry in the composition of the wall painting decoration of the eastern wall and the best visual effect for the illusionistic triptych.

It is interesting to observe the *trompe l'oeil* technique used to suggest an impression of depth, challenging the notion of a flat, coherent wall surface.¹³ The winged altarpiece is framed by a grid of imitation tracery, where shading is used to create a spatial effect. What is more, the triptych is not simply fitted into this frame, but positioned “before” it, as a real three-dimensional object would be placed (overlaps with the architectural background can be observed in the corners), while the three panels of the triptych appear as niches shown in perspective, housing monumental, statuesque figures, again suggesting a fictitious depth behind the wall surface. One should note at the same time that the composition with an imitation carved stone frame and statue-like figures in the side panels as well as in the central shrine bears no close resemblance to a specific type of a three-dimensional retable common at the time, which may be due to the fact that winged altarpieces were not yet so widespread in the region in the middle decades of the 15th century as they came to be a few decades later.

A closer resemblance to three-dimensional retables can be observed in the wall paintings from the village parish church in Racu (*Csikrákos*, c. 1500).¹⁴ Here two compositions imitating winged

⁹ DRĂGUȚ 1979, p. 257; FABRITIUS 2006, pp. 41–42; JENEI 2012, p. 55.

¹⁰ HEBERLEIN 2010, p. 149.

¹¹ In a South Tyrolean panel from around 1450 (Innsbruck, Tiroler Landesmuseum Ferdinandeum, Inv. Nr. IN 1945) and a triptych from the end of the 15th century attributed to the Master of Palanquinos (private collection, see *Sotheby's Old Master Paintings Day Sale, 04 December 2008*, Lot 152, <https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2008/old-master-paintings-day-sale-108037/lot.152.html>).

¹² On the hypothetical reconstruction of this figure, see KÓNYA 2023, pp. 414–417.

¹³ See also JENEI 2012, pp. 54–56.

¹⁴ LÁNGI, MIHÁLY 2002, pp. 18–19.



3. Racu (Csíkrákos), imitation winged altarpiece on the southern side of the chancel arch, c. 1500 (Photo: Anna Kónya)



4. Racu (Csíkrákos), fragment of an imitation winged altarpiece on the northern side of the chancel arch, c. 1500 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

altarpieces survive on the eastern wall of the nave on both sides of the chancel arch, which was a common location for side altars in the late medieval period.¹⁵ On the southern side, a winged altarpiece in a closed state was depicted with the standing figures of two female saints on the outer side of the wings (Fig. 3). The saint on the left, holding a brownish oval-shaped object, probably a loaf of bread, as an attribute, can be identified as St Elizabeth;¹⁶ to the right, the figure of St Helen holding the Holy Cross can be seen. One can note that the frames of the panels were decorated with a rosette-shaped stencilled pattern reminiscent of the stencilled gilding on the wooden frames of contemporary winged altarpieces. The composition is crowned with a superstructure imitating a carved gable.

The fragmentary composition on the northern side of the chancel arch probably represented an altarpiece in an open state, with the upper part of the central panel and of the right wing as well as part of the superstructure surviving (Fig. 4).¹⁷ On the right wing, the figure of St Dorothy

¹⁵ KROESEN 2010b, pp. 95–112.

¹⁶ JENEI 2016, p. 134.

¹⁷ The fragments of drapery folds in the upper left part are from an earlier wall painting layer; see LÁNGI, MIHÁLY 2002, p. 18.



5. *Maia* (Nyomát), Crucifixion scene on the southern side of the chancel arch, c. 1480–1500 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

holding a basket can be recognised; of the figure represented in the centre, only a fragment of the halo is visible. It seems likely that the Virgin Mary was depicted here, possibly with the child Jesus. On the one hand, the association of a virgin martyr such as St Dorothy with the Madonna – and possibly with another virgin martyr saint on the left wing – would have been a common iconographic formula, as can be seen in a wall painting composition serving as a retable in Póniky (*Pónik*), Slovakia,¹⁸ or in the central shrine of the altarpiece from Jimbor (*Székelyzsombor*) in Transylvania.¹⁹ On the other hand, the representation of the Virgin Mary would have fitted into the general pattern noted by Justin Kroesen that, from among the side altars on both sides of the chancel arch, the northern one was often dedicated to the Virgin.²⁰ From the territory of medieval

¹⁸ JÉKELY 2021, pp. 307–310, with references to the earlier literature.

¹⁹ SARKADI NAGY 2012, pp. 156–158, repr. II. 55; FIREA 2016, pp. 211–214, repr. 454/2.

²⁰ KROESEN, STEENSMA 2012, p. 17; KROESEN 2014, p. 167.



6. *Maiad (Nyomát)*, fragment on the northern nave wall, c. 1480–1500 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

Hungary, several wall painting compositions representing the Virgin Mary placed on the northern side of the chancel arch, exemplifying a similar arrangement survive.²¹

In a small village church in Maiad, two compositions taking over some elements of the structure of winged altarpieces survive. On the southern side of the chancel arch, the wall painting, which probably served as a retable to the side altar once positioned there, is composed of a main panel showing the Crucifixion and a “predella” below, with two kneeling angels holding a chalice and a host wafer in the centre, flanked by the fragmentarily surviving figures of St Peter with a key and St Paul with a sword (Fig. 5).²² The bipartite structure evoking the form and iconography of actual altarpieces provides a good opportunity for the vertical juxtaposition of the historical body of Christ crucified on the Cross with his sacramental body under the species of the consecrated bread and wine, suggesting the essential identity of the two.

A second, fragmentarily surviving composition on the northern nave wall, close to the chancel arch seems to imitate the carved superstructure of an altarpiece (Fig. 6). In the centre, the faint outlines of Christ on the Cross can be recognised – his wide-spread arms, his head tilted to the right, a fragment of his right leg, and the wavy line of the end of his loin-cloth – before

²¹ Examples include representations of the Madonna in Bădești (*Bádok*) in Romania, in Csaroda (Hungary), in Očová (*Nagyócsa*), Kraskovo (*Karaszko*), and Poniky (*Pónik*) in Slovakia and Horjani (*Gerény*) in Ukraine.

²² On this composition, see JÉKELY, KISS 2008, pp. 272–273; KÓNYA 2017, pp. 13–14.



7. *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök)*, the recently revealed wall paintings on the chancel arch and the side walls of the nave, probably 1519 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

a pale green coloured cross with an unusually long vertical arm. This central part is flanked by openwork tracery of vegetal scrolls, topped by leaf motifs and framed by crocket-decorated pinnacles. A somewhat comparable, although more elaborate arrangement is found in the altarpiece in Băgaciu (*Szászbogács*) dating from 1518.²³ There is no information on what the lower part of this composition looked like or whether it resembled a winged altarpiece. Its function is also not entirely clear; we can presume on the basis of its position on the northern wall that it probably did not serve as a retablo to a side altar standing at the chancel arch, usually facing the east, but that it still might have formed the visual environment of such an altar.

In *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök)*, four compositions inspired by the structure, iconography and decoration of early 16th-century winged altarpieces were revealed between 2020 and 2022 on the nave side of the chancel arch and the adjoining eastern sections of the nave walls (Fig. 7).²⁴

²³ SARKADI NAGY 2012, pp. 125–127, repr. II. 7; FIREA 2016, pp. 133–135, repr. 422/1.

²⁴ On this wall painting ensemble, see my forthcoming study: *Az alsótóki templom újonnan feltárt falképei*, *In Situ. Műemlékvédelem a Kárpát-medencében*, 4, 2023 [2024].



8. *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök),
the Coronation of the Virgin
on the southern side of the chancel
arch, probably 1519
(Photo: Anna Kónya)*

Originally, all fragmentarily surviving compositions probably had a tripartite structure made up of a predella, a central panel and a superstructure. Each pair of wall paintings – a wider, multi-figure narrative scene on the chancel arch and a narrower image featuring figures of standing saints on the northern resp. southern nave wall – probably together formed the decoration for the side altars which once stood each side of the chancel arch.

On the southern side of the chancel arch, the Coronation of the Virgin Mary by God the Father and Christ was depicted, topped by a superstructure evoking the carved and gilded vegetal ornaments of contemporary winged altarpieces (Fig. 8). On the adjoining southern nave wall, the fragmentary figure of *Maria in Sole* survives over a predella decorated with a volute coiled around a six-petal red rosette (Fig. 9).



9. *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök), imitation predella on the southern nave wall, probably 1519 (Photo: Anna Kónya)*



10. *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök), wall painting retable on the northern side of the chancel arch, probably 1519 (Photo: Anna Kónya)*



11. *Tiocu de Jos (Alsótök), four female saints on the northern nave wall, probably 1519 (Photo: Anna Kónya)*

The fragmentary composition painted on the northern side of the chancel arch can hypothetically be identified as the Adoration of the Magi (Fig. 10). Below, a composition type widely found on predellas, the Man of Sorrows rising from his tomb, flanked by the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist was depicted in a field which evokes the inverted trapezoid shape of contemporary altarpiece predellas. In the centre of the superstructure, the Martyrdom of St Sebastian was painted between two triangular fields filled with vegetal decoration. On the northern wall, a fragmentary composition, divided into four panels, each containing the figure of a standing female saint survives (Fig. 11). In the upper row, the figures of Mary Magdalene and St Helen can be hypothetically identified. In the lower row below, St Barbara and probably another virgin martyr saint were depicted.

Based on an inscription on the upper decorative border of the Coronation of the Virgin (MA • 1 • [5?...] 9 •), the ensemble probably dates from 1509 or 1519; formal analogues with contemporary winged altarpieces²⁵ point to the latter date.

ANALOGUES FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

Widening the geographical scope, I would like to provide a brief overview of Central European examples of wall paintings imitating winged altarpieces in more or less chronological order. Staying within the territory of medieval Hungary, but turning to medieval Upper Hungary (present-day Slovakia), two examples survive in the town of Košice (*Kassa*).

In the parish church of St Elizabeth, a composition resembling a triptych in an open state was painted probably around 1440 in the first northern side apse, with the Lamentation of Christ in the larger central panel, and two pairs of fragmentarily preserved Passion scenes on the wings (Fig. 12).²⁶ A fragment of a similar wall painting triptych survives on the eastern wall of the nearby chapel of St Michael with the date 1487 inscribed on the top.²⁷

Another composition imitating a triptych is fragmentarily preserved on the southern side of the chancel arch in the parish church in Žip (*Zsip*, Fig. 13).²⁸ Its central part is almost completely

²⁵ For instance, with the altarpieces from Saeş (*Segesd*, 1520–25) and Armășeni (*Csikmenaság*, 1523); see SARKADI NAGY 2012, pp. 134–137, 238–240, repr. II. 21, II. 176, II. 178; FIREA 2016, pp. 129–132, 301–304, repr. 421/1, 497/1.

²⁶ RADOCSAY 1977, pp. 25, 140; DVOŘÁKOVÁ, KRÁSA, STEJSKAL 1978, pp. 105–106; *Magyarországi művészet* 1987, p. 704; TOGNER 1988, pp. 53–54; JÉKELY 2009, p. 111 (raising the possibility of a later dating, approximately 1480–1490).

²⁷ JÉKELY 2009, p. 111.

²⁸ The mural altarpiece is younger than most of the wall painting decoration of the church probably painted around 1400, its fragmentary state however does not allow a more precise dating based on stylistic traits. While the composition has been so far dated to around 1500, formal analogues with altarpieces from around 1450–60



12. Košice (Kassa), St Elizabeth's church, wall painting triptych in the first northern side apse, c. 1440 (Photo: Béla Zsolt Szakács)



13. Žíp (Zsip), wall painting triptych on the southern side of the chancel arch, second half of the 15th century (Photo: Gergely Kovács)

destroyed, but on the basis of the surviving fragments, we can surmise that an illusionistic niche with a semicircular plan may have accommodated the central figure. The two pairs of panels on the wings each contained the representation of a standing saint, of which now only St Paul holding a sword can be recognized in the lower panel of the right wing.²⁹ The triangular motif visible over the left wing may be an echo of the row of triangular gables appearing in a group of altarpieces in the region dating from the middle decades of the 15th century.³⁰

Leaving the territory of medieval Hungary, an elaborate composition representing a winged altarpiece was painted in 1497 on the southern side of the chancel arch in the parish church in Burgusio (*Burgeis* in German) in South Tyrol (Fig. 14).³¹ The figure of the Madonna crowned by two angels and surrounded by rays of sun painted in the central panel is flanked by Sts Sebastian and Zeno represented on the inner side of the open wings, while a statue-like figure of the Man of Sorrows catching his own blood flowing from the side wound into a chalice was placed in the centre of the superstructure. On the predella, the Holy Face held by two angels was represented. The illusion is enhanced by details such as the shadow of the superstructure resembling the shadow a three-dimensional object would cast if placed before a wall and lit by light coming from the southern windows.³²



14. Burgusio (*Burgeis*), imitation winged altarpiece on the southern side of the chancel arch, 1497 (Photo: Anna Kónya)

(see below) suggest the possibility of a somewhat earlier dating. On the wall painting triptych and its dating, see BIATHOVÁ 1987, pp. 13–14; TOGNER 1988, pp. 118–119; KOVÁCS 2021, pp. 154, 156.

²⁹ KOVÁCS 2021, p. 154.

³⁰ Examples: Matejovce (*Mateóc*), c. 1450, Liptovská Mara (*Liptószentmária*), c. 1450–60.

³¹ SÖDING 2010, pp. 155–156; KROESEN 2010b, pp. 100–101; both with further bibliography.

³² SÖDING 2010, p. 156.

In the church of the former Cistercian monastery in Neuberg an der Mürz in Styria, a monumental triptych was painted on the western wall in 1505.³³ The composition, which is now largely covered by the organ tribune, represents the Holy Kinship in the central field and the Fourteen Holy Helpers in pairs of two as well as the Crucifixion in the smaller-sized side panels. The same master painted a triptych one year later in the chapel of the tower base in the parish church of Sankt Radegund bei Graz (1506), with the central image of the Pietà filling an ogival wall niche, flanked by the figures of Sts Andrew and Sebastian on the wings.³⁴ In both cases, the red colour of the imitation carved stone frames echoes the colour of the surrounding architectural elements. In the church of St Andrew in Weitensfeld im Gurktal in Carinthia, a fragmentary composition can be seen to the right of the portal on the western exterior façade, the surviving parts of which resemble a winged altarpiece in an open state with a central panel showing the martyrdom of the church's patron saint and an elaborate superstructure including a central gable panel with a three-figure Crucifixion.³⁵ The recently restored wall painting triptych in the Bishop's Gate porch of the Stephansdom in Vienna, painted around 1515, features St Leopold in the centre flanked by Sts Catherine and Margaret on the wings.³⁶

In the Sts Peter and Paul church in Westerbuchberg in Upper Bavaria, a closed polyptych was painted in 1524 on the eastern wall of the southern aisle, with the figures of the Fourteen Holy Helpers divided between the panels of the exterior side of the wings and the stationary wings, as well as the superstructure, where an imitation statue of the Madonna is placed in the centre on a corbel, accompanied by a kneeling donor figure.³⁷

The list of wall paintings representing winged altarpieces may be further expanded with compositions imitating a single element of the altarpiece structure (such as an illusionistic predella painted in 1493 in the southern altar niche of the St Michael's chapel in Taufers im Münsertal in South Tyrol³⁸), and with works of art continuing the trends outlined above, but dating after the Late Gothic period (such as a wall painting triptych featuring the figures of plague saints Roch, Sebastian and Fabian in Kaindorf, Styria, probably dating from 1560).³⁹

³³ LANC 2002, pp. 292, 296–300 (Textband), tables 388–392 (Tafelband).

³⁴ LANC 2002, pp. 555–559 (Textband), table 806 (Tafelband).

³⁵ I thank the restorer József Lángi for drawing my attention to this example.

³⁶ RAINER 2021.

³⁷ KROESEN 2010b, pp. 101.

³⁸ WEINGARTNER 1948, p. 64.

³⁹ I thank Christoph Tinzl for drawing my attention to this composition.

GENERAL PATTERNS

I am thus aware of altogether around sixteen wall painting compositions imitating the structure and decoration of Late Gothic winged retables. In terms of chronology, most of the examples date from the end of the 15th century or from the first quarter of the 16th century, corresponding to a flourishing period for the medium of winged altarpieces. Earlier representations include the wall painting triptychs in Košice (probably c. 1440) and Mediaş (c. 1450–1460). The latter composition, as I have noted, is a less close imitation of a specific retable type than most later examples; here the winged altarpiece genre is more like a visual idea which provides the starting point for the composition.

An interesting question concerns the relationship between form and function, that is to what extent wall painting compositions imitating the form of winged altarpieces actually functioned as retables. In most cases, the representations are positioned on the eastern nave wall on either side of the chancel arch or on the altar wall of a chapel, where they were likely connected to altars. It is interesting to note, however, that the format of the winged altarpiece was sometimes adapted without taking over its function, that is in the cases of compositions painted on the western wall of the nave (Neuberg an der Mürz), the exterior (Weitensfeld im Gurktal) or in other contexts where they were not associated with altars (the triptych in the Bishop's Gate porch of the Stephansdom in Vienna).

Focusing on the cases where the wall paintings probably functioned as a retable, an interesting aspect is that while an essential feature of a winged altarpiece was its variability due to its movable wings, which could be opened and closed, this feature for obvious reasons could not be reproduced in wall paintings, which could either depict an open or a closed state. In most cases an open state was captured, probably as it was more convenient to place the main iconographic theme representing the titulus of the altar in a larger-sized central panel, corresponding to the open state. As an exception, themes displaying an even number of figures such as the Fourteen Holy Helpers in Westerbuchberg or any pair of saints (like Sts Elizabeth and Helen in Racu), could be best arranged in a composition imitating a closed altarpiece.

In Racu, there is a unique solution, with one of the two imitated winged altarpieces surviving on both sides of the chancel arch depicted in an open and the other in a closed state. The simultaneous representation of the two states might have been a visual strategy to suggest the variability of the imitated object in the static medium of wall painting. The fragmentary composition on the northern nave wall in Tiocu de Jos, featuring standing figures of female saints in four compartments, might originally have also evoked in its structure and iconography the outer panels of contemporary winged altarpieces visible in a closed state, as opposed to an open state represented on the adjacent composition on the northern side of the chancel arch.

Another limitation inherent in the medium of wall painting was that unlike their three-dimensional counterparts, wall painting retables had to fit the narrow wall surfaces of the piers

of the chancel arch or the piers dividing the aisles, where side altars were usually located, which enabled only a relatively small-scale representation of the main theme in the central panel when a winged altarpiece in an open state was depicted. One possible way to overcome this constraint was to represent only the vertical elements of the winged altarpiece structure on these narrow surfaces, as in *Maiad* (predella and central panel) and *Tiocu de Jos* (predella, central panel and superstructure).

In conclusion, the examples presented above demonstrate different ways in which the structure, decoration, and iconography of winged altarpieces were imitated in the medium of wall painting. Despite its limitations, the adaptation of the format provided an eye-catching means of altar decoration as well as an opportunity for ingenious solutions, serving well the ambition prevalent in the Late Gothic period to illusionistically extend the wall painting's flat surface into a three-dimensional space.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ I am grateful to the organizers of the conference, as well as the participants for their remarks and suggestions, especially Tomáš Kowalski, Sunčica Mustač, and Christoph Tinzl. I also thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments.

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**PODOBE, LITURGIJA IN ILUZIONIZEM
POZNOGOTSKE STENSKÉ SLIKARIJE, POSNEMAJOČE KRILNE OLTARJE**

Povzetek

V poznem srednjem veku je stensko slikarstvo s svojimi iluzionističnimi učinki pogosto služilo posnemanju kosov liturgične opreme ali arhitekturnih elementov. To je bil hkrati privlačen in cenovno ugoden način, kako vizualno poudariti pomembne dele cerkvenih notranjščin. Zlasti v naslikanih oltarjih je velikokrat najti odmeve sodobnih tridimenzionalnih retablov. Posnemanje krilnih oltarnih nastavkov v stenskem slikarstvu, ki je bilo razširjeno od okoli sredine 15. stoletja dalje, predstavlja mikaven predmet raziskovanja, ki doslej še ni bil sistematično obdelan. Članek, ki se osredotoča predvsem na primerke iz srednjeveške Transilvanije, v analizo pa pritegne tudi analogije iz drugih delov srednjeveškega ogrskega kraljestva ter z Južne Tirolske, s Štajerske, iz Spodnje Avstrije in z Bavarske, preučuje, kako je bil tridimenzionalni in variabilni format krilnega oltarnega nastavka prenesen v medij stenskega slikarstva in zanj prilagojen ter kakšne so bile možnosti in omejitve takšnih prilagoditev.