

A Digital Reconstruction of a Lost Work of Micro-Architecture

Example of the Alabaster Tomb of St Hyacinth in the Dominican Church in Cracow¹

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St Hyacinth Odrowąż: His Cult and Canonisation

St Hyacinth Odrowąż (d. 1257) was the first Polish Dominican. A group of friars he was heading left Italy for Cracow, possibly in the spring of 1221, in order to establish a friary there. After several months' stay at Friesach in Carinthia, the friars arrived in Cracow on 1 November 1221. The Cracow Bishop Iwo Odrowąż offered them accommodation in his curia and then gave them the Holy Trinity Church – until then a parish church of all Cracow – of which the friars took possession on 25 March of the following year. The friary established at the time (which has continued to this day) is among the Order's oldest religious houses in general. Hyacinth, its first prior, was also involved in establishing subsequent Dominican friaries and sending missions to Rus' and Prussia. He died in the odour of sanctity and was buried in the Holy Trinity Church.

The tomb of friar Hyacinth soon became the focus of his intense cult. As early as the thirteenth century, miracles supposed to have been worked by his intervention started to be recorded, with an aim to be used in the intended canonisation process, and in the following century a *Life* of the future saint was compiled. In the mid-fifteenth century, the Bishop of Cracow, Cardinal Zbigniew Oleśnicki, with the support of Queen Sophia, started the first attempts at canonisation of the Dominican in Rome. They were resumed in the following century but, as the documents sent from Cracow were lost during the Sack of Rome, the process had stalled for a long time. It was only in 1594 that Pope Clement VIII, in a solemn ceremony pronounced Hyacinth saint, and the canonisation itself found broad resonance, also because of its missionary aspect, not only within the Dominican Order or in Poland, but also throughout the Catholic Church worldwide (*Święty Jacek*; Spież (2007); Walczak (2018)).

The Alabaster Tomb of St Hyacinth and Its Reconstruction

By the beginning of the sixteenth century the actual location of Hyacinth's tomb within the Holy Trinity Church had been forgotten, and only a roughly defined part of the church was given as its whereabouts (Szyma (2014)). It was only in 1543, after a long search, that the tomb was discovered at the eastern end of the church's northern aisle, and a construction of a separate chapel, intended to house the remains of the future saint, was started. Because of lack of space, it was located – unusually – above a Gothic chapel to the east of the north aisle, abutting the northern elevation of the chancel, that is, close to the actual tomb, but on a higher level. This relatively small space, consecrated in 1545 and known only from a general description, was likely accessible through a gallery on the chancel screen's upper storey. It was furnished with two altars which held the remains of Hyacinth and Wit (d. 1263/1268), a bishop of Lubusz and another Dominican candidate for canonisation, whose tomb is said to have been discovered during the search for the relics of Hyacinth. In 1581–1583, the original chapel was replaced by a new and more spacious one, built under the supervision of the Dominican Seweryn of Luboml, a postulator in Hyacinth's canonisation process. A new and very sumptuous tomb of the future saint, made of alabaster, was erected in the chapel. An account relating the construction and giving a general description of the chapel's interior was presented by Fr Seweryn in his work entitled *Nove capellae et altarium erectio* and in a new version of *The Life of St Hyacinth*, published to coincide with his canonisation in 1594. An extremely valuable and detailed description of the chapel and tomb was left by the papal master of ceremonies Giovanni Mucanzio who visited Cracow as secretary to the papal legate in the summer of 1596. Finally, the chapel and tomb were recorded in the diaries of the Dominican Martin Gruneweg, composed at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

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About twenty years later, the weighty tomb, considered a threat to the vaulting of the chapel underneath, was dismantled and replaced with a lighter structure (which, in turn, around 1700, had yielded to another structure, surviving to this day). Parts of the alabaster tomb and other artworks from the Holy Trinity church were re-used to assemble stalls in the chancel of St Giles' church in Cracow, also owned by the Dominicans. Fragments of the tomb were additionally employed in other parts of that church, e.g. altar tables and portals.

In 1948 Krystyna Sinko-Popielowa published an article in which she demonstrated that fragments of the former tomb of St Hyacinth survive in the stalls at St Gilles' church and discussed the written sources which recorded the tomb (except for Gruneweg's diaries which had been unknown at the time). Stefan Świszczowski, who made reconstruction drawings according to Sinko-Popielowa's instructions, supplemented her paper with additional drawings presenting his own version of the tomb's appearance (Sinko-Popielowa (1948), pp. 86-87). So far, none of the reconstructions has received a critical treatment. The pioneering work of both scholars must be corrected: for instance, an assumption that alabaster architectural fragments and sculptures, of which the St Giles stalls were assembled, came exclusively from Hyacinth's tomb, seems to be erroneous.

A project currently carried out at the Art History Institute of the Jagiellonian University, dealing with the artistic culture of the Cracow Dominicans³, provided an opportunity of re-evaluating the question. As a part of the project, a team of researchers of various specialities, aided by the laser scanning of St Giles' church (Fig. 1, 2) and a description of the tomb, are trying to identify the elements of the tomb and produce its digital reconstruction. New technologies provide a unique opportunity of credible verification of hypotheses on the tomb's appearance. The incompleteness of data results in a necessity to visually distinguish – by using different textures – between the surviving parts of the tomb and the reconstructed ones. The project includes also a comparative analysis of Cracow's mendicant churches and conventual buildings, which encompasses their comprehensive laser scanning. The data captured in this way are then processed into digital 3D-models of artworks of which only remnants survive, such as chancel screens, refectories or chapter houses.

Figures

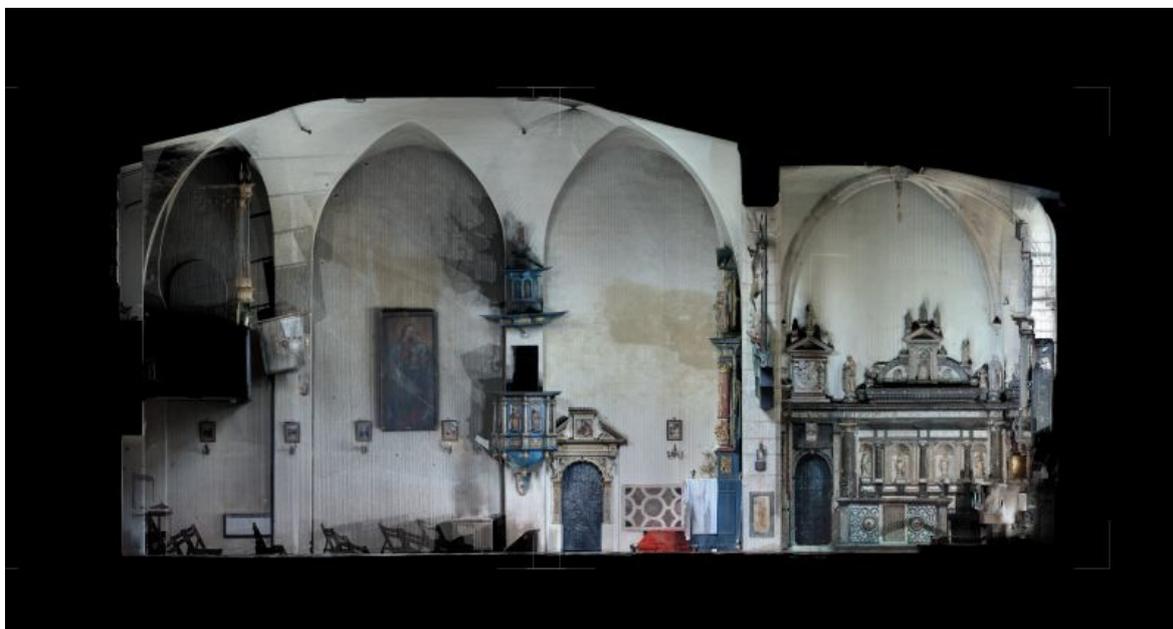


Fig. 1. Cracow, St Giles' church, longitudinal section showing the north wall; measurements and modelling: ArchiTube (© Uniwersytet Jagielloński)

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Fig. 2. Cracow, St Giles' church, longitudinal section showing the south wall; measurements and modelling: ArchiTube (© Uniwersytet Jagielloński)

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