



20. Altar wing with the Crucifixion from the so-called Litoměřice Altarpiece

Prague, Master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece, 1505–1507
Tempera on spruce wood; 177 × 121 cm

Of unknown origin; in 1633, donated to the Church of All Saints in Litoměřice (Leitmeritz); from 1885 in the museum of the Diocese of Litoměřice; in 1940, transferred to the Municipal Museum in Litoměřice.

Litoměřice, Regional Museum in Litoměřice, inv. no. 343; on loan to the North Bohemian Gallery of Fine Arts in Litoměřice (inv. no. Do-021)

OPITZ 1928, 54; PEŠINA 1950, 54, cat. no. 241–248, 119 (bibliography); STANGE 1958, 81–82; VACKOVÁ/HOŘEJŠÍ 1973, 498; KESNER 1977; KROPÁČEK 1980; KESNER 1989 (bibliography); KESNER 1990; CAT. PRAHA 1999; CAT. PRAHA 2007, 22–23, 32–34, 54–56; KYZOUROVÁ 2007; CAT. PRAHA 2015, 200, cat. no. II-20

Six panels have survived from the so-called Litoměřice Altarpiece: two panels painted on both sides with the subjects of the Nativity / Christ Bearing the Cross and the Visitation / Christ before Annas, and four panels painted on one side with the scenes of Christ on the Mount of Olives, Flagellation of Christ, Coronation with Thorns and Crucifixion. This last scene has a strikingly monumental character. The composition is dominated by Christ on a large, T-shaped cross.

To Christ's right, John the Evangelist supports the fainting Virgin Mary. The compositional schema is loosely inspired by a print of Albrecht Dürer from 1502–1503. It remains unknown whether the panels of the Litoměřice Altarpiece were produced in the early 16th c. for one of the churches in Litoměřice, or whether they were transferred to Litoměřice as late as 1633. Nor can it be ruled out that the altarpiece was commissioned directly for the capitular church of St Stephen in Litoměřice by provost Jan of Vartemberk and that, in 1633, Jiří Vilem Herold of Stod, a burgher of Litoměřice, donated it to the Church of All Saints. Another possibility suggests that the altarpiece was intended for the nearby abbey of the Premonstratensian nuns in Doksany. The artist, known by the auxiliary name Master of the Litoměřice Altarpiece, is an artistic figure who introduced into the Bohemian milieu Renaissance stylistic elements and an innovative style of representing nature and landscape that characterized the Danube school, that appeared, for example, in the work of Albrecht Altdorfer. Contrary to most of his contemporaries, this Master worked with his graphic models in a creative manner.





**21. Our Lady of Sorrows
and St John the Evangelist
from a Crucifixion
sculptural group**

Ore Mountains, c. 1510
Wood; full-volume sculptures,
hollowed out at the back; old
polychromy; 144 × 46 × 28 cm
(The Virgin Mary); 144 × 43 ×
28 cm (St John the Evangelist)
Of unknown origin; later housed
in the Regional Museum in Teplice.
Teplice, Regional Museum in
Teplice, inv. nos. OP 209 and 210

CAT. PRAHA 2015, 578, cat. no. IX-4

The statues represent the Virgin Mary and St John the Evangelist mourning at the foot of the Cross, but regrettably, nothing is known either of the group's appearance, or of the origins of all statues. Their size suggests that they were placed on the crossbeam of a triumphal arch or on a rood screen. Both sculptures are executed in the sure hand of a skilled woodcarver, who mastered sophisticated compositional arrangements.

The composition, drapery system, and the typology and execution of both faces indicate the master's reception of the sculptural style popular in Franconia around 1500. The sculptor could have drawn inspiration from the prolific workshop operated by Tilman Riemenschneider in Würzburg that employed as many as fourteen apprentices and assistants in the first decade of the 16th c. They then disseminated his workshop's stylistic mode throughout the neighbouring regions of Franconia, Saxony and the Ore Mountains.

22. Virgin and Child on a Crescent Moon from Osek

Annaberg (?), Master HW – Workshop of, c. 1510–1520
Wood, full-volume sculpture; original (?) polychromy;
151 × 44 × 30 cm

Osek (Ossegg), Cistercian Abbey (?); from 1988, in the Decanal
Church of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary
in Most.

The National Heritage Institute, Regional Heritage Authority
in Prague, on display in the Decanal Church
of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary in Most, inv. no. MO 5

HENTSCHEL 1926, 48; OPITZ 1928, 41, cat. no. 176;
CAT. PRAHA 2015, 617, cat. no. X-10

The altarpiece for which the sculpture was intended was probably installed either directly in the monastery's church in Osek, or in one of the churches in the villages pertaining to the abbey's estates (e.g. Libkovice or Mariánske Radčice). The statue is a representation of the Virgin Mary, standing upon a crescent moon (originally no doubt crowned) with the naked Child on her arm. Both jointly hold a bunch of grapes, or, more accurately, the Virgin is offering a bunch of grapes to the Child, who grasps it with both hands. The Eucharistic interpretation of this motif is indubitable: the bunch of grapes to be pressed during the making of wine symbolizes Jesus Christ, who will be martyred and crucified, and his redeeming blood will be spilt. His mother cannot prevent his suffering; on the contrary, she offers the bunch of grapes to him as a sign of her partaking in the sacrifice. The sculpture is attributed to the workshop of Master HW, who was probably active in Chemnitz and Annaberg. This monogrammist tends to be identified with Hans Witten.





23. Altarpiece with the Blessed Virgin Mary of the Rosary

Ore Mountains region – Freiberg (?), c. 1520

Tempera on wood; a three-wing retable with wings composed of two

panels, one above the other, and painted on both sides; centre:

The Virgin Mary in Glory; wings: St Christopher / St Margaret,

St Apollonia / St Barbara, St Lawrence / St Dorothy; one wing panel,

painted on both sides, is now missing; 150.5 × 100 cm (centre);

74–75 × 40.2–43 cm (wings)

Of unknown origin; later on, in the picture gallery of the Cistercian

Abbey in Osek; in 1856, central panel donated to the Picture Gallery

of the Society of Patriotic Friends of the Arts in Prague; the wings

depicting SS Christopher, Margaret, Apollonia and Barbara purchased

for the Waldes Collection; in 1999, purchased for the National

Gallery in Prague; in 1950, the wing with SS Lawrence and Dorothy

transferred to the Regional Museum in Teplice.

Prague, The National Gallery in Prague, inv. nos. O 39, O 17436,

O 17437 (centre and wings depicting St Christopher / St Margaret,

and St Apollonia / St Barbara); Teplice, Regional Museum in Teplice,

inv. no. Osek 85 (wing depicting St Lawrence / St Dorothy)

OPITZ 1928, 55, 70, cat. no. 212; CHYTL 1931, 24; PEŠINA 1950, 65, 123;

HENTSCHEL 1973, no. 312; SANDNER 1993, 162–166; HAMSÍKOVÁ 2004

(bibliography); CAT. PRAHA 2015, 618, cat. no. X-11

The central panel of this smallish retable is a rare example of a rosary image. Although its original location is unknown, its incorporation into the Baroque picture gallery of the Cistercian Abbey in Osek and the specific, patently Catholic-oriented iconography allow one to infer that it was directly intended for the monastery or one of the churches belonging to it. This would have been either the Chapel of Our Lady, which was commissioned c. 1520 by Abbot Martin to be built at the side of the monastery's chapter hall, or the pilgrim church in Mariánske Radčice, where the existence of a brotherhood of the rosary is documented at that time. The central panel's painting represents an enthroned and crowned Virgin Mary supporting a standing Christ Child on her lap, surrounded by crowds of saints and the Holy Trinity. Jesus uplifts the rosary wound around his neck. Compositionally, the standers-by are divided into two groups: representatives of the Church hierarchy, with the Pope at their head (to Mary's right) and representatives of the secular structure, headed by the Emperor (to Mary's left). In terms of style, the author of the Osek altarpiece draws inspiration from the artistic centre in Freiberg, Saxony. At the same time, though, his manner of execution betrays his acquaintance with Rhinish painting. Earlier scholars identified the artist as Gangolf Herlingar, a court painter to Vladislaus Jagiello, who – according to written records – retired in his old age to the Osek monastery. Nevertheless, this hypothesis does not seem plausible, as the work was most likely an import from Saxony.

