The Staging of the Passion Scenes: A Stylistic Essay
Six Paradigms from 14th Century Fresco Painting
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The paper analyses the creative approach in the configuration of compositional schemes depicting the Passion scenes in several painted ensembles from the 14th century in terms of the stylistic nuances of their execution. Starting from the interaction of structural components of the pictures, it gives insight into the artistic qualities of the scenic arrangement of the represented motifs.

The visions, sentiments and impressions related to the last earthly days of the Messiah which flow from the Gospels as a kind of expressive literary testimony concerning the suffering of the One benevolently sacrificed for the Salvation of mankind were depicted in the fresco decoration of Christian sanctuaries already in the first centuries of the new era. Within the Byzantine artistic production of monumental painting, the illustration of the Passion cycle, becoming an integral part of the painted programme of the churches, followed the chronological sequence of events in the framework of the appropriate liturgical order which was officially formulated in the 11th–12th centuries; however during the Paleologan epoch, the apocryphal stories and the religious drama greatly influenced the depiction of the Suffering motifs, supplementing the Evangelic descriptions with picturesque artistic details. In the decorative ensembles of the representative monuments from 14th century fresco painting, the Passion cycle was given notable attention in terms of the scenic arrangement, the inventive configuration of which was supposed to revive the dramatic tension of Christ’s suffering. As on the imaginative stage of an illusionistic medieval theatre, the acts of the sacred drama of the Passion evolved through the decades of artistic creation, decorating the walls of churches with a considerable diapason of distinctive compositional solutions. Several fresco ensembles dating from this period reveal superb artistic qualities in the visualization of the expressive thematic content of the subject in question.

Within the ceremonial atmosphere of the painted programme in the church of Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (1316–1318), the Passion cycle is depicted in the third zone of the fresco decoration and flows along the walls of the naos with a balanced rhythm of a sacred protocol. The perfect equilibrium of the structural elements and the harmony of all the painted components of the compositions, as traits of the entire ensemble created by the atelier of Michael Astrapas, have nuanced the extensive narration and inventive illustrativeness of the depicted events with a hue of ritual performance in celebration of the benevolent sacrifice of the ultimate Redeemer. The symmetrical distribution of the masses, the proportional compositional schemes and the exceptional architectonics in the conception of the scenes, as a structural skeleton for the refined emotional charge of the drama, sublimed the inherited iconographic patterns and the sophisticated painterly qualities of the artistic expression in a vision of festive serenity. The uninterrupted rhythm of the action, based on the moderate sway of the movements and the classically balanced postures of the participants in the illustrated events, are complemented by many details and the lavishly shaped architectural panoramas, whose painterly dynamics is completely subjected to the ceremonial animation of the figural elements of the compositions. Out of the entire painted decoration of the church, the Passion scenes represent the best examples in achieving a firm and distinct compositional scheme, perfectly structured by the interaction between the dramatic act and the architectonic backdrop. The thoughtful arrangement of the actors, the firm cohesion of their postures and the vivid scenery constructed of well-selected elements, as well as the wealth of decorative components, almost reached the classicist perfection in the visualization of the Evangelic synopsis. The delicately balanced arrangement of the actors in the festive event of the Last Supper, nuanced by the refined spectrum of moderate gesticulation in front of inconspicuously designed architectonic scenery, fascinates with the theatrical spirit of a secret ceremony. The vivid gestures of the apostles in the scene of the Washing of the Feet ennobled the composition with the bright hues of temperamental mobility, which flows beneath the picturesque architectural setting. The formally unified shapes of the painted edifices in the scene in which Christ is talking to the apostles after washing their feet, correlate with the structure of the figural representations in the foreground, leveling the inter-balance of the masses in both prospects of the composition.

The rich repertory of the means of expression and the skill in structuring the compositions reflect the methodical discipline of the painterly discourse, which imposes itself with its intended seriousness; however, the resplendent wealth of selected details and the manner of
their rendition speak in favour of the intentional decorativeness on the part of the masters who created the Passion scenes delicately enough to radiate with an atmosphere of festive serenity. The geometric severity in the arrangement of the painterly elements and the arithmetic meticulousness in the construction of the firm compositional units create the foundation of a balanced dynamism in the painted arrangement, where an exceptional harmony is achieved in terms of the relationship between the forms and their dynamic life within a particular space. In that regard, the horizontal row of niches in the wall in the architectural backdrop of the Mocking scene (Fig. 1), reflects the symmetry of the organization of the masses in the rear of the composition, while the mise-en-scène, absorbing the expressive emotional charge of a mimicric play, is condensed within the narrow stage of the theatric performance. By including carefully selected and skillfully treated formal elements in the basic structure of the scene, arranged within a precise context of the dynamic lines of the composition grid, the picture in which Christ is being raised on the Cross (Fig. 2), reveals that both the form and the dynamics are subjected to the ceremonious rhythm of the depicted event. The counterpoising of the groups of the Jews and the soldiers in the concept of horizontal disposition of the masses, as well as of the two boys in the vertical axis of the scene in front of the vast landscape scenery, is the manner that enabled the balanced inclusion of the episodical characters on the stage of the festive performance of Christ’s suffering.

However, the climax of the dramatic action elaborated through ceremonial motion on the podium of solemn grief is achieved in the composition of the Deposition (Fig. 3), a masterpiece of the efforts to depict a compact vision of characters and gestures, permeated with a unique sense for a refined emotional expression. The triangular compositional scheme, firmly connecting all the actors in the scene, provides a basis for a coherent view, while the measured movements of the impeccably shaped figures, nuanced with the pompous streak in their classically balanced postures, constitute the foundation of the dynamic structure of the picture. The disposition of the characters around the lifeless figure of the Crucified suggests unpretentious depth in the construction of the scene thus the mourning witnesses, communicating with delicate gestures and silent glances in the side parts of the composition, can give an episodic contribution to the main act in the center of the view. From Adam’s skull in the front prospect to the elevated figure of Joseph of Arimathea in the peak of the composition, the carefully elaborated kinetic lines of the figures participate in the subdued emotional tension of the depicted event. With the optical unity of the faultlessly carried out organization of the composition and the firm cohesion of the postures and gestures of the depicted participants in the scene, the formal serenity of the sight reflects the representative spirit of a suggestively captured ceremony.

In the painted decoration of the church of Saint Nicetas near Skopje (after 1321), the atelier of Michael Astrapas once again expressed superb skillfulness in the execution of the compositional structure in exposition of Christ’s Passion, creating a peace of art with extraordinary visual qualities and exclusive mastership in realization of the spatial effects. Through the delicate sense of proportional arrangement of the components, the refined approach to the tactfully dynamized movements of the depicted figures and the refined feeling for an elegant anatomic constitution of the saints, the illustration of the
Passion scenes glows with the thoroughbred rhythm of extensive narration, as well as with the energetic freshness of the compositional structure of the pictures. The skillfully arranged mise-en-scène, the perfect balance of the postures and the delicately dynamized gestures of the figures make the main features of the solid compositional schemes, marked by the unity of optical impression, accomplished by an appropriate interaction of the figural components and the spatial dimensions of the scenes. The ceremonial harmony of the Passion scenes in Staro Nagoričino, altogether with the festive elaboration of the compositional matrices, in St. Nicetas have been replaced by the fresh dynamic charge of the views, permeated by a great deal of kinetic energy and temperamental mobility. The specific rhythm in the representation of the pictures derives from the perfect equilibrium of the classicist forms and the exceptional balance between the plastic shape and psychological expression of the characters. Depicted by the variety of gestures in the scene of the Washing of the Feet, the emphasized gesticipation in the Lamentation, the dialogic motion in the Last Supper, and the gentle outburst of subdued sentiments in the Deposition, the theatric action of the protagonists in the illustrated events expresses the dignified emotional balance of the compositions.

Another feature of the illustration of the Passion scenes in the church of St. Nicetas is the faultless interrelation of the figural components of the scenes with the architectural forms that create the three-dimensional backdrop, enclosing the space where the action takes place. The integration of the images into the thoroughly organized spatial concept of the compositions, resulted in an enrichment of the architectural scenery, which, by its inventively constructed spatial effects, equally participates in the illustration of the synopsis of the theme. The enhanced role of the scenery in the realization of the thematic content initiated greater elaboration of the structural components of the scenic backdrop, as well as the accentuated dynamic of the spatial context, adequate to the emphasized mobility of the figural repertoire of the scenes. Depicted in the rear of the compositions, the architectural coulisses are shaped with incredible imagination in the conception of the plastic forms, executed as elaborate facades subjected to the dominant rhythm of the narration in the scene. The intention to create three-dimensional architectonic constructions, which accentuate the spatial atmosphere of the scenes by the plastic firmness of the shapes, can be noticed in the picture of the Last Supper (Fig. 4), where the playful arrangement of the scenery forms a perfectly balanced background for the distinctively dynamized action of the figural components. The same feature marks the composition of the Washing of the Feet, where the dynamically elaborated architectural vista in the backdrop of the scene is composed as a perfect counterpart to the vivid psychological expression of the apostles’ figures in the foreground of the picture. Their arrangement in three separate groups, located on, as well as in front of and behind the bench, situated in the geometrical center of the scene, provides a three-dimensional illusion in the construction of the spatial qualities of the composition. The inclusion of the two platforms in the spatial organization of the scene de-
the Passion cycle encompasses twelve scenes. The skillful organization of compositional schemes, the dexterity in achievement of spatial coherency, as well as the sense of integration of the figural components with the architectural background of the pictures, speak in favour of the consistent efforts of the masters to follow the classicistic principles of their predecessors from the second decade of this century. However, with the picturesque details included into the playful iconographic matrix of the scenes, they enlivened the vocabulary of the classicist expression, infusing a great deal of immediateness in the construction of the compositions and unpretentiousness in the visual configuration of the depicted motifs. The aesthetic qualities of the representations, saturated with the luscious nuances of the inventively conceived narration in the scenes, are mainly the outcome of the extraordinary dynamics of the figural components, as well as of the exuberant energy of the compositions, resulting in exciting effects of a vivid theatrical play. The sincerity of apostolic gestures in the scene of the Last Supper, the inconspicuous interaction of the disciples in the composition of the Washing of the Feet, the uninterrupted vivacity of the temperamental movements in the picture of Christ Being Raised on the Cross, and the spontaneous expression of emphasized sentiments in the Crucifixion, are just some of the examples of the immediate artistic vision of the Pološko fresco painters.

The meticulous approach in organization of the compositional schemes encompasses the skillfully conceived scenery elements that provide optimal spatial solutions to the authentically configured iconographic arrangement of the scenes. The composing of the spatial rhythm and the temporal synchronicity in the exposition of the different episodes of the painted events with the help of the scenery elements is one of the prominent features in construction of the scenes by the Pološko masters. In that regard, the symmetric level of the spatial qualities in the composition depicting Christ Before Pilate (Fig. 6) is acquired by the location of the three actors in front of the luxuriously conceived portico, while the episode of the dialogue of Pilate’s wife with the servant at the entrance of their home is located behind the procurator’s throne. Without disturbing the symmetrical arrangement of the protagonists, the image of the young servant participates in the picture of the trial that goes on at the main stage. Appearing in the narrow inter-space between the two prospects of the scene, thus connecting the two subsequent episodes, he simultaneously separates the figural components of the composition from the architectonic ensemble in the rear of the scene. On the other hand, the illustration of the Trials by the two Jewish high priests, Annas and Caiaphas (Fig. 7), is conceived as a performance at the main stage, crowned by a portico, which connects the depiction of the trials with the episodes displaying the Denial of Peter. At the same time, the image of the woman servant appearing beneath the portico and in front of the open gate, although playing a supporting role in the action, imposes herself as a constructive spatial and temporal link between the scenes, thus integrating the sequences of the event into a unique artistic vision.
The picturesque atmosphere of the compositions depicting Christ’s Passion, fulfilled with the playful rhythm of the movements and the vivid gestures of the protagonists, reached its climax in the representation of the Mocking (Fig. 8), a paradigm of the vivid theatrics, characteristic of the artistic language of the Pološko fresco painters. The slightly disturbed symmetry in the arrangement of the images, the selection of various postures for the represented figures and the waving dynamics of the compositional scheme, in which Christ is surrounded by the mischievous mobility of the supporting actors, nuanced the dishonourable event with the hues of a spontaneous street performance. The awkward acrobatics, the jeering gesticulation and the comedy-like grotesqueness in the depiction of the characters, reveal the sense of extraordinary playfulness of the compositional arrangement, permeated by the temperamentally rhythm of the frivolous motion. The inconspicuous construction of the architectonic scenery in the backdrop of the composition, the asymmetrical arrangement of the figural components, as well as the inclusion of raffish details in the depiction of the characters, are united in a comedy-like artistic vision of a great and spontaneous energy.

Within the aristocratic sensibility of the painted decoration in the church of the Holy Mother of God in Mateič (1348–1352), the harmonious tone in the depiction of the Passion scenes expresses the graceful dynamics of courtly elegance. The transparent scenes without shadows depict the tragic events of Christ’s Sufferings, in which the pathos and strong feelings have been irretrievably washed away in the deep sea of poetic melancholy. Through creation of elegiac sights full of solemn, fes-

Fig. 7. St. George in Pološko, Christ Judged by Annas and Caiaphas

Fig. 8. St. George in Pološko, Mocking
tive movements and melancholic spirituality, the authors of the Passion cycle have composed calm and balanced compositions exhibiting great skill in the organization of the spatial entities and in the symmetrical arrangement of the depicted figures. The gracious spirit of noble festivity, the exciting easiness of the forms and the translucent brightness of the views have become elements of an illustration permeated with delicate atmosphere of exotic narrativeness. Although the symmetrical arrangement of the components is not always the main principle in configuration of the compositional schemes, the harmoniously structured rhythm of the movements, achieved by the refined gesticulation of the depicted figures, enabled faultless balance of the dynamic lines in the execution of the scenes. Imbuing the different prospects of the composition with the noble energy of elegant theatrics, it merged the figural elements and the scenery into a unified spatial organism with remarkable optical qualities.

The concord of the structural components based on the extraordinary balance in the arrangement of the figures, their skilful spatial organization and the harmonious rhythm of the movements, are the main features of the masters in the creation of calm and solemn compositions, with a light atmosphere of courtly ceremony. In the perfect equilibrium of the scene depicting the Crucifixion (Fig. 9), marked by the symmetry of the forms and the extraordinary spatial arrangement of the compositional elements, the three simultaneous events are sublimed in a single vision of the suffering. The torso of Christ, depicted in the geometrical axis of the scene, is flanked by the figures of both the bandits, disposed in the same horizontal level and in an ideal inter-relation to one another. The long wall, depicted in the rear of the scene that visually divides the composition into two horizontal plans, is conceived as the scenery of the action in which the six tormentors are located in couples beneath the crosses. To the side of Christ’s figure, the soldiers approach the Crucified with calculated movements, while the other two pairs, in perfectly symmetrical swings, strike the malefactors, with their truncheons. The exalted symbolic of the event, accentuated with the effectively elevated figures of the three actors in the scene, is effectively complemented by the elements from the lower level of the composition, where the supporting roles of the soldiers and the tormentors perform their acts in front of the architecture scenery, depicting the wall of Jerusalem. Raised in its tragedy to the celestial heights of a dramatic spectacle and perfectly harmonious in the noble accords of a divinely elaborated mise-en-scène, the Crucifixion in Matejče is created as a visual oratorio in honour of the benevolent sacrifice of the One who suffered for all mankind.

The subtly balanced arrangement of the masses and the refined gesticulation of the figures as executors of the action in the scenes, are associated with the substantial dose of elegance, that mark even the illustration of the more vigorous themes. In that regard, the picture of the Betrayal displays proportional disposition of the compositional elements, accomplished by careful arrangement of the multitude of the participants in the event, depicted with inconspicuous gestures and modest emotional expressiveness. Similar scenic arrangement is applied to the depiction of Christ Talking to the Women of Jerusalem on his way to Golgotha (Fig. 10), in which the slow-pace walking soldiers are symmetrically arranged around Christ’s figure in the center of the scene, while the proportional disposition of the elements is acquired by the counterpoising of the women, located in the left, with the landscape scenery in the right upper part of the composition. The classical harmony in the execution of the scene and the perfect equilibrium of the masses in the depiction of the Preparing of the Cross is accomplished by the symmetrical arrangement of the figures grouped to the side of the cross, as well as by the
representation of both the young men who hammer the nails in its base, in identical position and in symmetrical relation to the beholders. The same principle in construction of the scene is applied to the illustration of the Mocking, in which the horizontal and the vertical axis of the composition crisscross in the figure of Christ, depicted in the centre of all dynamic lines of the composition. The architectural scenery in the upper register of the picture provides a counterpart to the depicted figures of the lower zone, while the slightly agitated characters of the soldiers energize the scene with a sparkle of emotional tension. Although a great deal of details are included in the representation, the symmetrical disposition of the masses resulted in a perfect concordance of the compositional elements, imbued with an atmosphere of a dignified tragedy. Solemn in the tone of expression and noble in the character of execution, the poetically refined Passion scenes in Mateič echo with the accords of a majestic theatrical performance.

Contrary to the elegiac tone of the paintings in Mateič, the illustration of the Passion story in the church of Saint Demetrius in the Monastery of King Marko (1376/1377) burns in the flames of its untamable dynamics, disconsolate anxiety and explosive expression of emotional resonances. A whole world of passionately configured forms and contrasting optical effects, brought down from the celestial heights of the Biblical stories and plunged into the ecstatic embrace of human suffering, fulfils the execution of Evangelic events with the restless hues of a dramatic emotional vortex. The devastating energy of the voluminously modeled forms, the invasive dynamics of the figural arrangement, and the eruptive intensity of the movements, have become the main features of one of the most expressive panoramas of Christ’s suffering in the fresco painting of the 14th century. The dynamic complex of compositional elements, the severe rhythm of the motion, the suggestive gesticulation of the figures, as well as the psychological depth of the images are the components that create the dramatic tension of the scenes, flared up upon the stage of the glorious tragedy. The acting performance of the images, passionately devoted to the exposition of strong feelings and dramatic atmosphere, springs out from the bitter outburst of tension, unbreakable in its raw energy of hopelessness and despair. All the components of the composition, permeated with the enkindled power of expression, are united in a thrilling theatric performance, raised from the abyss of ecstatic suffering.

The desire for a deep emotional expression in the illustration of the Passion events in the Marko’s monastery resulted in the construction of simple compositional schemes, with a firm cohesion of the structural elements and accentuated moderation of scenery components. The fierce whirl of movements, which enraptures the actors in their endeavor to enliven the expressive tragedy of scenic performance, affected the simplification in the construction of the scenery, the noticeably unified forms of which enclose the backdrop of the compositions. In that regard, the illustration of the Passion events display the reduction of the available diapason of scenic décor with the purpose of emphasizing the dynamically structured figural aspects of the composition. The neglected role of the architectural background in the realization of the spatial configuration of the scenes in favour of the enforced emotional structure of the figural elements affected the formal neatness of the shapes, thus the modest spatial differentiation of the architectural backdrop, as well as the monotonous contours of the scenery in the compositions, are the elements of the almost neutral coulisses of the dramatic action. Although the decorative treatment of the architectural components is not entirely missing, the simplified patterns of the ornamental decoration in execution of the forms, as in the rear prospect of the scene depicting the Last Supper, are not contributing effectively to overcoming the monotony of the scenery concepts.

The simplicity in the construction of the scenery in the backdrop of the illustrated events taking place in pleneur, is particularly striking. Shaped only as contours of the spatial context of the representations, the mildly curved silhouettes or the inconspicuously edged lines of the landscape components, are created as a neutral background for the theatric suggestiveness of the sights. The negligently sketched forms of the exterior concept in the illustration of the events depicting the Mocking and the Road to Golgotha, as well as the unpretentious construction of the environmental landmarks in the compositions of the Preparing of the Cross, Christ Being Raised on the Cross and the Crucifixion (Fig. 11), are the features of the appropriately conceived scenery for the expressive rhythm of the dramatic action in the scenes. However, the dynamic context of the lines and the accentuated spatial anatomy of the landscape components in the picture of the Agony in the Garden participate effectively in cre-
The broken volume of their contours, the explosive restlessness of the forms and the nervous rhythm of the lines accentuate the dramatic intensiveness of the view, thus creating an extensive spatial arrangement of the figural elements. The destructive power of the sharp platforms that penetrate the view with a severe energy in order to distinguish the sequel of events, are the most appropriate elements for creation of the dramatically enlivened stage for the passionate scenic performance of the Suffering.

In the luxuriously energized narration of the painted decoration in the church of Saint Andrew in the Monastery of Andrejaš (1388/1389), the creative imagination of Metropolitan John permeated the Passion scenes with academic consequence and accentuated meticulousness in the execution of the themes. With the perfect architectonic in creation of the forms, the spatial equilibrium in construction of the scenes, the harmonious rhythm of compositional structures and the refined spectrum of optical effects, the illustrated story of Christ’s Suffering enrolls on the walls of the church as a majestic theatric performance with unsurpassed artistic qualities. The thorough modeling of the forms, the flawless arrangement of compositional elements, the inventively elaborated architectonic panoramas and the succulent saturation of luminous effects, created a world of skillfully composed views, with luxuriously structured character of epic expression. Within the perfectly configured staging of the scenes, the protagonists of the Passion events walk with energetic paces of immortal veterans, descended from the sacral heights of the Biblical stories. Through an experience of supreme actors, the colossal figures of the saints, monumental in their powerful anatomy, sensual in their facial expression and energetic in their balanced motion, enliven the classically structured compositions with the luxurious rhythm of a festive atmosphere. Given the picturesque energy of their postures, the monumental extensity of the gestures and the noble temperament of emotional expression, they play the roles of their lives in the magnificent Biblical epic for the salvation of humanity. The solemn plasticity of the movements and the exclusive sense of noble pathos of the images in the scene depicting the Deposition (Fig. 12), created with remarkable perspective illusion and extraordinary spatial arrangement of the figures, as well as the almost protocol-like rhythm of the soulfully structured figural arrangement in the composition of the Mocking, created with immaculate equilibrium in the disposition of the masses, are just some of the examples of the distinguished artistic vocabulary of the painter in his endeavor to explicate the dramatic effects of the pictures.

However, the exceptional visual esthetics in construction of the spatial effects in the compositions, is the most appreciable quality of the painting of the church. The illusionist accents on the architectural décor, the picturesque informality in execution of exterior landmarks and the extraordinary spatial disposition of the figures in the picture of the Last Supper, speak in favour of the unsurpassed mastery for a perspective concordance of compositional elements. The proportional arrangement of the figural components within the three-dimensional projection of the spatial features in the scene of the Washing of the Feet, enclosed by a precisely configured architectural scenery, contributed to the vivid impression of the optical unity of the composition. The immaculately realized coordination of the spatial arrangement of the figural compo-
nents in the scene depicting the Betrayal of Judas and the transparent proportionality in construction of the staging in the picture of Entombment of Christ, are the perfect specimen to disclose the master's talent for creation of distinct visions fulfilled with an atmosphere of noble tragedy. The effectively conceived spatial qualities and the pretentious consistency in disposition of the figures in the already mentioned scene of the Deposition (Fig. 12), permeated with the refined nuances of emotional substratum, elevated the mournful sight into a tragic view of a theatrical spectacle, as an exquisite achievement in creation of the luxurious mise-en-scène of the painting in the church.

In their creative endeavor to visualize the dramatic essence of the Biblical story of Christ’s suffering within the more or less customary conceived iconographic arrangement of the Passion cycle, the painters invented ways to enoble the canon patterns of the compositions with the stylistic diversity of their artistic expression. In that regard, the configuration of the scenes, the thematic context of which encompassed the sentimental charge of the Evangelic events describing the agony of the One sacrificed for the Salvation of humanity, implied consolidation of the figural components as executors of the dramatic action and the secondary elements as constituents of the compositional matrix of the pictures into an emotionally balanced structure of expressive visual messages. As the above mentioned examples belonging to the representative fresco ensembles dating from the Paleologan epoch demonstrate, the elaboration of the illustrated motifs in terms of their conceptual union, based on the interaction of the characters and the setting, resulted in several distinctive types of staging, appropriate to the stylistic trends of the 14th century fresco painting. The classically balanced geometrical constitution of the symmetrical arrangements of the Passion scenes in Staro Nagoričino, the accentuated dynamism of the spatial context in the illustration of the Suffering in St. Nicetas, the playful configuration of the pictorial narration in depiction of the Evangelic events in Pološko, the noble accords of the luxurious mise-en-scène displaying the story of Golgotha in Mateič, the eruptive intensiveness of the explosive performance in the drama of the Passion in Marko’s monastery and the dignified energy of the action in the majestic play dedicated to Christ’s sacrifice within the luxuriously arranged scenery in Andrejaš, are the paradigms of the superb artistic mastery in creation of the visual expression of the Biblical story of Christ’s Martyrdom on the grandiose stage of medieval artistic performance.

Bibliography

Илустрације Христових страдања – чије је иконографско уобличење укључило у основну садржину јеванђељских описа мноштво занимљивих појединица из апокрифних текстова – одликују се у сликаним ансамблима из XIV века многим новим решењима у погледу сценичког аранжмана. Продор живописне наративности стила епохе Палеолоغا у иконографски контекст насликаних тема, који је довоело до раскошнијег сценског аранжмана, подразумевао је увођење стилских одлика попут промишљеног просторно-временског аспекта призора, визуелне повељности целине и амбициознијег приступа у решавању сценичким елемената слике. Нова просторна логика у распореду делова композиције и вешто конструисан однос фигуре и сценичког кулиса допринели су визуелној целовитости представа и омогућили остваривање јединства призора.

Различити примери занимљиво разрађеног мизансцена у приказивању Христових страдања у репрезентативним темама тог периода откривају стваралачки допринос великих мајстора епохе Палеолога. Ритмичност која се показује у представама циклуса Страдања у цркви Светог Ђорђа у Старом Нагоричану, остварена помоћу беспрекорно организованих композиционих схема, изванредног просторног аранжмана и свестреној повељности њихових ставова и гестова и живописних сценичких елемената, пренела је тај натпревар у свечаним звуком богослужења. Изузетним осећањем за савршене пропорције исказаним у распореду ликовних маса, префињеним приступом ритму покрета представљених фигуре и доследношћу у конструкцији чврстих архитектоника композиција сликари Христових мука у Светом Никити код Скопља остварили су јединство оптичког утиеска, уз изванредну повељност драмске радње и сценичког кулиса. У снажним резонанцима сликаног програма цркве Светог Ђорђа у Полошком непретенциозност визуелног израза дочарава немиран дух спонтанетног театарског представа. Продор грациозног ритма дворске елеганције у композиционији склоп Христових мука у Богородичиној цркви у Матеичу, оствареног готово узбудљивом лакоћом облика и савршеном уравнотеженошћу покрета и ставова, открива атмосферу парадне свечаности аристократског церемонијала. Динамични склоп елемената композиције и жестока ритмика кретања ликовних маса, суставна гестикулација фигуре и унисекунданта на израз њихових радња основна су средства у приказивању драматичности Страдања у Марковом мањом уметништву. Савршеном архитектоником облика, ве- дрном сензибилношћу призора, хармоничним ритмом композиција и отменим кретњама светитељских фигура израз сликарства Андрејаша претворио је драмски набој Христових мука у спектакл дворског театра.

Од класицистичке отмености Старог Нагоричанина и префињене энергије ликовног израза у Светом Никити, преко непосредности нарације у Полошком и песничког сензибилитета Матеича, екстатичног патоса сликарства Марковог манастира, до еллинистичког академизма живописа у цркви манастира Андрејаша – сценски аранжман у приказивању јеванђељских сведочанства о мучеништву Спаситеља представља највише стваралацког домета аутора на неким од најрепрезентативнијих слика Христових мука.