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## PICTORIAL SOURCES FOR OBJECTS BELONGING TO RESIDENTIAL INTERIORS ON MEDIEVAL WALL PAINTINGS IN SLOVENIA

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### ABSTRACT

*In order to find as much as possible about the objects that were characteristics for residential interiors in the Late Middle Ages, we searched for traces of them in Gothic wall paintings in Slovenia. The interpretation of registered pictorial sources is based on a comparison between the general line of development of individual kinds of objects used in medieval society and the objects surviving in Slovene museum collections.*

**Key words:** objects, residential interiors, pictorial sources, frescoes, Slovenia, Late Middle Ages

## FONTI PITTORICHE PER OGGETTI APPARTENENTI AGLI INTERNI RESIDENZIALI NEGLI AFFRESCI MEDIEVALI IN SLOVENIA

### SINTESI

*Per poter sapere quanto più possibile sugli oggetti caratteristici degli interni del tardo Medio Evo, si sono cercate tracce nelle pitture murali gotiche in Slovenia. L'interpretazione delle fonti pittoriche si basa sul confronto tra lo sviluppo generale dei singoli tipi di oggetti utilizzati nella società medievale e gli oggetti presenti nelle collezioni dei musei sloveni.*

**Parole chiave:** oggetti, interni residenziali, fonti pittoriche, affreschi, Slovenia, tardo Medio Evo

## INTRODUCTION

The period covered by the theme is that of the Late Middle Ages – from the late 13<sup>th</sup> to the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Art history refers to this period as the Gothic. Research has been focused on the illustrations of objects in medieval frescoes in Slovenia and has had to observe the methodology for treating the objects themselves as well as the pictorial sources for them.

Since objects do not "speak for themselves" it was long held that they are mute, hard to understand, and that they can only be of use as charming illustrations of the past. Nowadays we have come to accept that the great value of objects as historical sources lies in the fact that they are direct witnesses to past periods, and that they do not distort the image of the past (as may happen, for instance, when written sources are used uncritically). It is therefore appropriate to say that objects represent a "frozen" image of the past and that they are the most pristine remains of a time that has passed.

Such views derive from the function of objects held in a museum – the only institutions which collect, preserve and do research on objects, and present them in their exhibitions. A task which is to be accomplished primarily by museums is thus to learn about objects, establish their meaning, and to extract from them the message they have to tell us.

This task engages different basic scientific disciplines which include objects in their research and which are aimed at the same objective – to know the past. These disciplines are history, art history, archaeology and ethnology.

The ideal approach to do research on the past is thus a interdisciplinary one, a co-operation in which various fields of research work on the selected issues. The research and interpretation of objects is not about trying to distinguish between the individual disciplines involved, but about acquiring a comprehensive knowledge of the objects and complementing this knowledge across the various disciplines.

A specific problem encountered in the research is the fact that relatively few objects have survived from the Late Middle Ages. The reasons for this fact have been put forward in the catalogue of the exhibition *Gothic in Slovenia – The World of Objects*, (Gotika v Sloveniji, 1995) installed in the National Museum of Slovenia in 1995. Of the principal reasons, why the number of survived objects was heavily reduced by the test of time, the following may be mentioned: many objects were discarded as waste because tastes changed, others were destroyed by the Turkish incursions or were melted down (valuable ecclesiastical objects) as part of the defence measures against these incursions; further detrimental events were the expulsion of the Jews, the dissolution of the monasteries under Joseph II, and, finally, the fall of the castles, the ravages of

war in the past century and their consequences, the attitude to the cultural heritage etc. Museums thus became and still have been the only refuge for objects.

Given this fate, we tried to find a new source which would bring the objects from the Late Middle Ages closer to our understanding and found it in the pictorial illustrations of objects.

The analysis of the artistic illustrations of objects belonging to the movable cultural heritage of the Late Middle Ages was based on the fact that medieval frescoes in Slovenia were painted under the influence and as part of the flow of ideas from a wider European context. At the same time they were the result of domestic artistic developments which depended on the openness of the individual provinces to foreign influences, on the operation and talents of domestic and itinerant artists and their workshops and, of course, also on the wishes of the commissioners of these works of art. Painting therefore is an essential part of the cultural identity of the Slovene territory, and at the same time it is part of the common European cultural heritage.

Similarly to art, material culture – which encompasses the objects surrounding people for some time during their lives – constitutes a part of a period's identity. People of the Late Middle Ages are no exception, because they, too, were surrounded by a wealth of objects.

In order to learn as much as possible about the objects typical of this period we have tried to find traces of them in the survived Gothic wall paintings in Slovenia.

In doing so we took account of the basic purpose of medieval works of art which were, of course, subjected to religious contents and as such carried out their mission of being the "Bible of the illiterate" (Jaritz, 1980, 8). The developments in the Late Middle Ages, however, also caused them to reflect and express the time in which they originated. This was necessary for them to address the people of their time. In order to be closer to them their artistic approach included objects people were familiar with because they were surrounded with them in their everyday life. If and where objects appear in the presentation of individual sacred events, they are usually depicted in order to emphasise something particularly significant. This has nothing to do with realism in the present sense of the word, but with making the religious message more tangible by using everyday examples, and with "humanising" the message (Vavra, 1984, 203).

However, considering individual compact European areas, including the Slovene provinces, this certainly does not mean that every depicted object, view of a landscape or town, is typical of that area or even directly copied from it. And though there is no way to prove this beyond any doubt, we may nevertheless conclude that the depicted objects or scenes from everyday life were characteristic of life in the Middle Ages. The "reality of paintings" however remains just that and nothing more, and it cannot be the reality of everyday life.

Pictorial sources can be used as tools of interpretation because we compare them with other sources. If certain written sources or survived genuine objects did not exist, paintings should not be used to the extent practised nowadays for studying everyday life in the past (Jaritz, 1989, 19).

In order to experience "life's reality" as reflected in a unique written source from this period – Paolo Santonino's *A Traveller's Diaries* (Vale, 1943) – we have used his references of particular types of objects, made during his visits to our provinces in 1486 and 1487, as contemporary illustrations. This complementation seems relevant as the text is a unique document of the cultural history of Europe's Late Middle Ages, reflecting the author's mentality as well as the time in which it was written.

The selection from the extensive documented material, provided by the surviving medieval frescoes in Slovenia, is limited below to the objects which belong to residential interiors; attention is drawn to some typical objects and they are illustrated with selected pictorial sources. From these we shall attempt not only to learn about individual types of objects, but also about their different forms.

## FURNITURE

This is especially true of furniture. Among the material in Slovene museums, no **benches** have survived. The pictorial sources help us to distinguish simple benches in which the legs are plain stakes inserted into the seat in the form of a triangle (*The Last Supper, 1400-1420, Selo v Prekmurju*) (Fig.1), and other benches in which the inserted legs are only slightly angled (*Judas receiving thirty pieces of silver, between 1451 and 1459, Slovenj Gradec*).

**Fig. 1: *The Last Supper, 1400-1420, Selo v Prekmurju (detail)*.**

**Sl. 1: *Zadnja večerja, 1400-1420, Selo v Prekmurju (detajl)*.**

**Fig. 2: *Crowning of Mary, ar. 1450, Suha pri Škofji Loki (detail)*.**

**Sl. 2: *Marijino kronanje, ok. 1450, Suha pri Škofji Loki (detajl)*.**

Chest-benches had the form of a plain elongated chests without back rest and were used to seat several people (*The Last Supper, 1370-1389, Crngrob*). A special bench form evolved in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, the *cassapanca* – a wooden bench with a built-in chest under the seat. It had a high back rest, arms rests, and in order to increase its representative character it was set on a carefully designed footrest, on which people rested their feet, protecting them from the cold and moisture rising from the floor.

The depicted chest-benches vary substantially. A bench in which the left and right sides of the box-like part's front are shaped differently probably is the fruit of the artist's imagination. The left side has a conical arch, while the right side has two small arches, one set on top of the other. The base is often flat and moulded, the back rest has laths and the front reveals pointed arches (*Crowning of Mary, ar. 1450, Suha pri Škofji Loki*) (Fig. 2). The front of the box-shaped part of the bench is ogee carved to the left and right, while the sides are cut into the shape of arches (*The Annunciation, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

A novelty of the Late Middle Ages was benches with a movable back. They were particularly convenient for sitting beside the fireplace as the movable back made it possible to sit comfortably regardless from which side the fire's warmth came. In the only pictorial source which shows such a bench (*St. Ulric at Supper, 1502, Križna gora*) (Fig. 3) the bench is placed at a table. The bottom part of the side is ogee carved while the top is concave. A small disk, inserted at the joint of the side and back, forms the main part of the swing-mechanism.

Medieval frescoes reveal quite a range of different **chairs**, but only two have survived in Slovene museums

peak in the Renaissance in Italy. Two illustrations of this chair have been recorded in Slovenia, the former (*The Adoration of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 5) suggests a *Savonarola* chair because it partially shows the form of a chair with a typically upward curved section with an arm rest topped in a carved conical extension. The chair's legs are curved and end in animal paws.

**Fig. 3: St. Ulric at Supper, 1502, Križna gora (detail).**  
**Sl. 3: Sv. Urh pri večerji, 1502, Križna gora (detajl).**

(a stool from around 1500, and a *Savonarola* chair from the late 16<sup>th</sup> century) (Bučič, 1973, 57). In the paintings we find a stool, a chair with a semicircular back, a chest chair, a foldable chair (*faldistorium*), a *Savonarola* chair, a wicker chair, as well as various forms of luxurious chairs.

The simplest is a stool which consists of a board and three or four stake-shaped legs (*Judas receiving thirty pieces of silver, between 1451 and 1459, Slovenj Gradec*). An example of a simple foldable chair without a back appears in a pictorial source (*The Circumcision of Jesus, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 4), in which the bottom part of the chair, consisting of four crossed stakes is clearly visible, as well a seat furnished with cloth or leather.

Another form of foldable chair is that made of bent and crossed legs – an X- frame chair. This is a comfortable chair, called *Savonarola*. The first are known to have existed in from the mid 15<sup>th</sup> century reaching their

**Fig. 4: The Circumcision of Jesus, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).**

**Sl. 4: Kristusovo obrezovanje, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).**

**Fig. 5: The Adoration of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).**

**Sl. 5: Poklon svetih treh kraljev, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).**



**Fig. 6: The Adoration of the Magi, 1490, Hrastovlje (detail).**

**Sl. 6: Poklon svetih treh kraljev, 1490, Hrastovlje (detajl).**

The latter (*The Adoration of the Magi, after 1521, Vine pri Zagorju*) shows a Savonarola chair with curved and crossed legs, while the back is clearly identifiable. The bent slats become denser at the bottom; they cross at the seat to curve upward again and form the arm rests. These illustrations make it clear that the new type of chair appeared quite soon in our pictorial sources.

Though wickerwork furniture, made of stakes and rods, was common in the Middle Ages, we have found only one illustration of a wicker chair (*Christ before Pilate, 1400-1420, Selo v Prekmurju*). The chair's legs show a range of semicircular cut-outs, its back and arm rests are semicircular, too. The side which is visible in the painting is interlaced.

Thrones are luxurious chairs, designed in the Gothic spirit, which in accordance with the iconographic motifs appear in particular scenes. Such chairs were used in churches to seat church dignitaries, and in the great halls by the lord of the castle and his eminent guests. Cushions covered in tapestry or embroidered cloth were often added (Bučić, 1973, 12). The chairs had back and arm rests and often also a canopy (*The Journey and Adoration of the Magi, first third 14<sup>th</sup> century, Selo v Prekmurju*). Master Janez from Kastav no doubt used the

same print when painting twice the same luxurious chair (*The Adoration of the Magi, 1490, Hrastovlje* (Fig. 6); *The Adoration of the Magi, ar. 1490, Gradišče*), of which the left side is clearly visible. The sides are filled out with a rich, three-dimensional foliate ornament with acanthus leaves. The cresting consists of scrollwork and is decorated with a foliate ornament ending in a crocket.

By the Middle Ages **tables** had not yet acquired a permanent place in the living quarters. They were moved about and reassembled when needed. Three ancient tables have survived in Slovene museums (National Museum of Slovenia, Koper Regional Museum, Ptuj Regional Museum) (Gotika v Sloveniji, 1995, cat. no. 2. 1. 5). The paintings indicate that both simple and more demanding executions of tables existed.

Simple tables had a board at table height and stake-shaped legs, driven into holes in the table's corners. The legs are usually angled (*Holy Sunday – A butcher chopping a leg, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob*) (Fig. 7) with added stretchers (*Jesus drives the Merchants from the Temple, between 1451 and 1459, Slovenj Gradec*).

A typical example of a late medieval table is depicted in *Holy Sunday (A tailor sewing at a table, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob)*, in which the leg has the same width as the table top. The bottom is carved into scrollwork, while the top part is carved into an arch and ends in a hump. The thinnest part of each leg has a hole for inserting the stretcher.

An example of a drawer table – these had one or more drawers under the table top which could be lifted – is illustrated by the representation of a table (*Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 8) which has an upright board inserted under the table top, perhaps indicating a drawer.

**Fig. 7: Holy Sunday-A Butcher Chopping a Leg, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob (detail).**

**Sl. 7: Sveta Nedelja-Mesar seka stegno, ok. 1455-1460, Crngrob (detajl).**

**Fig. 8: Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).**

**Sl. 8: Marijina pot v tempelj, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).**

No **cradles** have been preserved, but two types of cradles are depicted. In two illustrations (*The Holy Kinship, 1480-1490, Senično pri Golniku; Mary's Birth, Var. 1480-1490, the painted ceiling in Breg pri Predvoru*) the cradles are supported by C-shaped rocking legs, their ends are segmented, and have openings for the handles. Another cradle is shown in *The Dance of Death (1490, Hrastovlje)* (Fig. 9) and has the form of an elongated box, fixed to the rockers with projecting scrolls on all four corners (Makarovič, 1981, 191).

Since no **beds** are extant, pictorial sources are the only way to document their different forms and showing mats, bedsteads, beds with legs and headboards, canopy beds, drawer beds, and beds with a chest-bench.

**Fig. 9: The Dance of Death, 1490, Hrastovlje (detail).**  
**Sl. 9: Mrtvaški ples, 1490, Hrastovlje (detajl).**

**Fig. 10: The Death of St. Martin, 1392, Martjanci (detail).**

**Sl. 10: Smrt sv. Martina, 1392, Martjanci (detajl).**

On his journey through Styria, Carinthia and Carniola Paolo Santonino noticed that people seemed to have geese everywhere, and even the lowest crofters had down-filled duvets (Vale, 1943, 170).

An ordinary wooden bed or bedstead usually was a shallow box with four legs or a base. Beds with straight foot and head boards end in slender posts at both ends. These are taller than the central part of the boards and at the top they turn into volutes turned inside (*The Death of St. Martin, 1392, Martjanci*) (Fig. 10), or extend just a little above the board in volutes turned inside (*St. Nicholas provides dowries for three poor brides, ar. 1410-1420, Breg pri Predvoru*).

**Fig. 11: The Annunciation, ar. 1520, Svino pri Kobaridu (detail).**

**Sl. 11: Oznanjenje, ok. 1520, Svino pri Kobaridu (detajl).**

**Fig. 12: *Mary's Birth, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).***

**Sl. 12: *Marijino rojstvo, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).***

On perhaps the oldest representation of a canopy bed (*Mary's Death, late 14<sup>th</sup> century, Tinska gora*) the back of the canopy is placed at the headboard and it is perforated by two Gothic two-lights with tracery. The front and sides of the canopy are decorated with shallow carving and cut out to form arches, the canopy's top is ornamented with a row of perforated, triangular extensions imitating pinnacles.

**Fig. 13: *Crucifixion and the Donor's Family, ar. 1430-1440, Ptuj (detail).***

**Sl. 13: *Križanje z donatorjevo družino, ok. 1430-1440, Ptuj (detajl).***

The only recorded box-bed in a fresco (*The Annunciation, ar. 1520, Svino pri Kobaridu*) (Fig. 11) stands in the corner of the depicted room. Its tall sides reach almost to the ceiling, and a flat canopy overhangs the entire bed. Beside the bed there is a chest-bench, used to mount the bed. It may, of course, also have been used to store various objects (*Mary's Death, mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, Vuzenica*). The bench may be entirely designed as a chest (*Mary's Death, 1456, Muljava*) or its sides may be slightly higher than the longitudinal part of the bench, and the upper parts may be cut to form an undulating pattern, while the bottom part of one side reveals a cut-out in the form of a Gothic trefoil (*Mary's Birth, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig.12).

Throughout the Middle Ages **chests** preserved their centuries-old function as the main storing furniture. They stood in corridors and entrances, at the foot of beds in bedrooms, and in dining rooms their usual place was at the wall, among wooden benches. Quite a number of chests survived in our museum collections (National Museum of Slovenia, Maribor Regional Museum, Koper Regional Museum) (Bučič, 1984, cat. no. 1-7). Only four have been recorded in pictorial sources (*The Annunciation, 1430, Piran; Crucifixion and the donor's family, ar. 1430-1440, Ptuj* (Fig. 13); *Holy Sunday – Dressing up, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob; Mary in the temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

The chest in the Ptuj painting (Fig. 13) summarises the genuine Gothic characteristics. It stands on a base whose bottom is cut out in one place at the side and in three places in front, and the box-like part of the chest is decorated with ornamental moulding.

To date only one illustration of a **cupboard with shelves** is known (*Mary's Death, mid 15<sup>th</sup> century, Vuzenica*). It has been placed behind the headboard of bed revealing two shelves and objects arranged on them. The top part consist of a saw-toothed lath.

## VALUABLE OBJECTS

**Valuable objects** in the form of different vessels were a typical status symbol in the Middle Ages and the materials they were made of were costly in their own right: gold, silver, and precious stones. The only evidence we have of these vessels of different forms comes from the pictorial sources. The most frequent are scenes from *The Journey and Adoration of the Magi* which reveal vessels of various forms: a cup (*The Journey of the Magi, 1440-1455, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju*) (Fig. 14), a vessel shaped like a horn, jewellery cases (*The Journey and Adoration of the Magi, 1467, Mače nad Preddvorom*), and a cup decorated with precious stones (*The Journey of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 15).

on his head, whose hands are spread out holding a plate with moulded edges and the nozzle (Gothic in Slovenia – The World of Objects, cat. no. 3. 1. 2). Only one illustration of a two-arm candlestick has been found in the frescoes (*Still-life with candlestick, ar. 1520, Brod v Bohinju*) (Fig. 16).

**Fig. 14:** *The Journey of the Magi, 1440-1455, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju (detail).*

**Sl. 14:** *Pohod svetih treh kraljev, 1440-1455, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju (detajl).*

**Fig. 15:** *The Journey of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).*

**Sl. 15:** *Pohod svetih treh kraljev, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).*

## LIGHTS

Lights have found their way to collections in the form of oil lamps (Gotika v Sloveniji, 1995, cat. no. 3. 1. 48; cat. no. 3. 1. 51; cat. no. 2. 2. 3. 19; cat. no. 2. 3. 5; cat. no. 2. 3. 6) and candlesticks. Especially interesting among them is a two-arm candlestick in the form of bearded man in a tunic with wide sleeves and a tricorn

**Fig. 16:** *Still-life with candlestick, ar. 1520, Brod v Bohinju (detail).*

**Sl. 16:** *Tihožitje s svečnikom, ok. 1520, Brod v Bohinju (detajl).*

Glass lamps were typical of the Middle Ages, but unfortunately none have been preserved. In the frescoes we find them in the hands of wise and unwise virgins in two paintings (*The wise and unwise virgins, 1470-1475, Goropeč nad Ihanom* (Fig.17); *The wise and unwise virgins, 1536, Polce*). In the first painting the form of the lamp is fairly clear: a funnel-shaped bottom to hold in one's hand and a cup-shaped top. In the pictorial source we can even see that the cup-shaped parts of the lamps have vertical ribs on the body.

Santonino reports on glass lamps when he describes an event in Villach: "It happened that the Holy Sacrament, the Eucharist, was taken to a sick citizen... Four lads dressed in red and with red caps on their heads carried four lit glass lamps in their hands, fixed to painted holders or sticks, and they marched up front singing songs of praise." (Vale, 1943, 195) Lanterns, too, are depicted quite often in the frescoes.



Bottles typical of the Late Middle Ages were pear-shaped or spherical with long narrow necks. There are both types of bottle on the wall paintings: spherical ones with a long, narrow neck (*The Last Supper*, ar. 1370-1380, *Crngrob*); *The Last Supper*, ar. 1460, *Vitanje*) (Fig. 18), and, in one fresco, a bottle with a high kicked base (*Still-life with bottle*, 1490, *Hrastovlje*) (Fig. 19).

Another type of bottle were the ones with round and pear-shaped bodies and wide, slightly shorter necks and everted rims (*The Last Supper*, ar. 1480-1490, *Koseč*).

**Jars and jugs** are both found in the paintings and in museum collections. Excavated ceramic vessels are particularly well represented in museums collections, but unfortunately they have not been evaluated yet. In the pictorial sources jars with a round body prevail; their base is usually wider at the bottom, they have round everted rims and handles (*Adam and Eve working*, 1490, *Hrastovlje*).

**Fig. 17: *The Wise and Unwise Virgins*, 1470-1475, *Goropeč nad Ihanom* (detail).**

**Sl. 17: *Pametne in nespametne device*, 1470-1475, *Goropeč nad Ihanom* (detajl).**

#### TABLEWARE

A special group of objects consists of tableware. Only fragments of **bottles** are to be found in museum collections: the body of a bottle, pinched under the neck, with a wide foot (Štular, 1975, cat. no. 62), a fragment of a pinched bottle with an applied ornament in the form of a thick intertwined thread (*Gotika v Sloveniji*, 1995, cat. no. 2. 1. 20), the neck of a bottle with an applied blue thread (*Gotika v Sloveniji*, 1995, cat. no. 3. 3. 2. 5) and a fragment of a pinched bottle with a deeply kicked base (Kos, Žvanut, 1994, cat. no. 10).

**Fig. 19: *Still-life with Bottle*, 1490, *Hrastovlje* (detail).**

**Sl. 19: *Tihožitje s steklenico*, 1490, *Hrastovlje* (detajl).**

**18: *The Last Supper*, ar. 1460, *Vitanje* (detail).**

**Sl. 18: *Zadnja večerja*, ok. 1460, *Vitanje* (detajl).**

**Fig. 20: *The Annunciation*, 1459, *Kamni vrh* (detail).**

**Sl. 20: *Oznanjenje*, 1459, *Kamni vrh* (detajl).**

**Fig. 21: Still-life with Jar, 1490, Hrastovlje (detail).**  
**Sl. 21: Tihožitje z vrčem, 1490, Hrastovlje (detajl).**

In one instance (*The Annunciation, 1459, Kamni vrh*) (Fig. 20) a jar is used as a vase – the flowers painted in it indicate this function. The vessel has a widened base, a globular body, a ring around the neck, the rim widens slightly at the top, and the handles extend to the middle of the body where they bend outwards.

Mention must also be made of a jar (*Still-life with jar, 1490, Hrastovlje*) (Fig. 21), which by its form and the style of its painted globular section belongs to the typical Italian majolica jars. It is particular because of the painted oval shield on the body's front which is bordered by two parallel lines and because of the stylised ornament on it.

On his journeys Santonino was often offered drinks in jars. At Rosegg Castle the castellan Andreas " himself took a big jar and let all the members of our travelling company drink from it" (Vale, 1943, 211). On "Mount of the Mercy" (Ptujška gora) Santonino had to sit beside Omelia, the lady of the house, "who offered him to drink from the jar she and her good husband usually drank from" (Vale, 1943, 238). These references confirm that it was usual for several people at a table to drink from the same jar. In Celje the mighty master lord sent Santonino, who did not take his supper with the others, "a big tin jar, full of excellent Malvasia wine, to drink in his honour" (Vale, 1943, 265).

**Glasses** are also vessels used for drinking as part of tableware and several have been preserved in museum collections. One of them is a glass made of clear light green glass, blown into a ribbed mould: a thread is applied under the rim, and the base is strengthened with applied glass protuberances with openings (Štular, 1975, cat. no. 48). A specimen of a prunt glass has a trailed thread below the widened funnel-shaped rim, a flame-like glass protuberance was applied to the base and protruding prunts were applied to the body (Kos,

Žvanut, 1994, cat. no. 51). A small tumbler with a warty pattern on the body was blown into a mould with a pattern of wart-like protrusions. The warty pattern is seen in the lower section of the body, and is barely apparent in the narrow band below the rim (Kos, Žvanut, 1994, cat. no. 50). A stalk beaker is green blue and has a trailed thread below the widened funnel-shaped rim; its base is saw-toothed. The body has six vertical rows of applied drops or prunts which make it resemble a cabbage stalk (Kos, Žvanut, cat. no. 49).

Several typical forms of medieval glasses can be detected on wall paintings.

Footless glasses were used for many centuries. As they had no base, people had to hold them in their hands and on emptying them, put them upside down on the table. In the pictorial sources a number of glasses is laid or set upside down on a table. It is obvious from the illustrations that the bottoms of these glasses were conical (*The Last Supper, between 1451 and 1459, Slovenj Gradec*) or round (*The Last Supper, ar. 1460, Vitanje*).

Short and wide glasses with a more or less widened rim, called *maigelein*, were typical products of forest glassworks. They were decorated with molten blobs and ornamental ribs or had pronounced protuberances on the body. Such a bowl-shaped glass with indicated prunts on the body is found in the pictorial sources (*The Last Supper, ar. 1370-1380, Crngrob*).

Barrel-shaped or cylindrical glasses were very common. And we often find such glasses in Slovenian medieval frescoes (*The Last Supper, ar. 1460, Vitanje*). Some of them are wider at the top (*Herod's Feast, ar. 1525, Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru*) (Fig. 22).

**Fig. 22: Herod's Feast, ar. 1525, Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru (detail).**

**Sl. 22: Herodova gostija, ok. 1525, Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru (detajl).**

Prunt glasses were conical, their body was either smooth or covered with vertical ribs. Hence their name of prunt glasses. Such a glass can be identified on the illustration of a glass with a flat base and ribbed body which widens towards the top (*St. Ulric at supper, 1502, Križna gora*) (Fig. 23).

**Fig. 23: St. Ulric at Supper, 1502, Križna gora (detail).**  
**Fig. 23: Sv. Urh pri večerji, 1502, Križna gora (detajl).**

The pictorial sources contain references to another drinking habit in the Middle Ages. Simultaneously glasses of different shapes were used at a table. This is illustrated by a scene from *The Last Supper* (Crngrob, ar. 1370-1380). Several types of drinking vessels can be identified in the painting. The apostle to the left holds a *maigelein* glass, the second apostle with his back turned towards the observer has a conical glass, on the table between the third and fourth apostle stands a ribbed glass, between the fourth and fifth apostle there is a *maigelein* glass with molten drops applied to the body, and the last of the apostles to the right is drinking from a conical glass.

Santonino, who was often offered drinks on his journeys, confirms this variety of glasses in his writings. At Goldenstein Castle the guests were served excellent wines in silver cups (Vale, 1943, 128). In the public inn in Innichen they were offered wine in silver cups (Vale, 1943, 131). At the parish priest's house in the village of Doelsach they drank from two silver cups which were "gilded and very precious" (Vale, 1943, 140). In Dravograd they emptied many glasses (it is not mentioned of what type) (Vale, 1943, 145). At Rosegg Castle there was plenty of wine and "every guest had a silver, glass or crystal cup" (Vale, 1943, 209).

**Fig. 24: The Journey of the Magi, ar. 1440-1445, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju (detail).**  
**Sl. 24: Pohod svetih treh kraljev, ok. 1440-1445, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju (detajl).**

An interesting example of illustrated drinking vessels, made of wood, ceramic, metal or glass are footed cups (Scheuer). Typically, the body is round and has a handle, a low base and a short neck. Such a drinking vessel has so far been found in only one pictorial source (*The Journey of the Magi*, ar. 1440-1445, *Srednja vas pri Šenčurju*) (Fig. 24).

The drinking ritual requires a vessel to cool the drinks. The depicted vessel on three legs (*St. Ulric at Supper*, 1502, *Križna gora*) is full of water and the drink is chilled in a jar with a lid. Similarly shaped is the vessel in *Herod's Feast*, (1525-1530, *Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru*) which stands on short slanted legs.

**Knives** are certainly the oldest items of cutlery, known from prehistoric times. A knife and a spoon were an individual's personal property and in some places part of a person's outfit. Up to the late 17<sup>th</sup> century it was indeed not common for the host to provide his guests with the necessary cutlery. In the preserved knives the back of the blade is straight, the handle lined with profiled bone which ends in the ornamental motif of a palmette; the oval end is decorated in relief as well (Gotika v Sloveniji, 1995, cat. no. 3. 1. 14).

The depicted knives have straight (*The Last Supper*, 1400-1420, *Selo v Prekmurju*) or long blades with straight backs and a slightly convex cutting edge (*The Last Supper*, between 1451 and 1459, *Slovenj Gradec*).

Describing a lavish dinner at Goldenstein Castle, Santonino writes: "Here I should mention something quite extraordinary: nearly everybody at dinner – and they all looked more likely to jump than to fly, attacked the partridges – fliers in the bowl with their knives and teeth" (Vale, 1943, 128).

Until the 16<sup>th</sup> century wood was the principal material tableware was made of. The well-to-do classes of society replaced them with ceramic, glass and tin products. But in the new materials the forms of the wooden vessels were often preserved. No wooden objects have survived, while on the other hand several thousands of fragments of ceramic tableware have and are found at practically every archaeological site. Archaeologists have elaborated a typology and have classified tableware into different groups and subgroups (Stare, 1996, 125-135).

As to the other tableware, **plates** often were just small wooden boards or rings on which food was placed. The plates found depicted in the frescoes are plain and probably imitate turned products. Some are deepen in the centre and have a wide edge (*Still Life with a plate*, 1490, *Hrastovlje*). A deeper plate or a small dish which is rather shallow appears only in one fresco (*Mary's Death*, 1504, *Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

The pictorial sources have little to report about the forms of **bowls**, but there is a wealth of these ceramic objects among the material acquired for museums by archaeological methods. The depicted bowls have legs

**Fig. 25: *The Last Supper, 1370-1380, Crngrob (detail).***  
**Sl. 25: *Zadnja večerja, 1370-1380, Crngrob (detajl).***

and a base decorated with a row of flutes (*The Last Supper, 1430-1440, Dragomer*). The rims are either everted or inverted (*The Last Supper, 1370-1380, Crngrob*) (Fig. 25).

**Trays** as shown in the pictorial sources are mostly round and have smooth edges. The body is decorated with ribs arranged in pairs (*St. Ulric at Supper, 1502, Križna gora*) (Fig. 26), or it may be raised (*Herod's Feast, ar. 1525-1530, Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru*).

Santonino, a keen observer at the feasts he and his companions were treated to during their journey, makes no mention at all of plates. They were, however, often served food in bowls. At Goldenstein Castle they were served trout and grayling in big bowls, placed on the table (Vale, 1943, 128). At Rosegg Castle "several chicken, or, better, winged hens" were served; "they were served in a wide bowl and in their broth, prepared and colourfully decorated with eggs and spices" (Vale, 1943, 209). At Beckstein Castle "the seventh dish was oats, cooked in a fat beef broth and served in a wide brilliant bowl" (Vale, 1943, 213). On "Mount of the Mercy" (Ptujška gora) the starter consisted of strawberries "which were first chilled in a bowl with fresh water and then at the table added to the wine" (Vale, 1943, 236).

**Fig. 26: *St. Ulric at Supper, 1502, Križna gora (detail).***  
**Sl. 26: *Sv. Urh pri večerji, 1502, Križna gora (detajl).***

**Fig. 27: *The Adoration of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).***

**Sl. 27: *Poklon svetih treh kraljev, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).***

Various **table cloths** existed as shown in the paintings of *The Last Supper*. They were white (*The Last Supper, 1370-1380, Crngrob; The Last Supper, 1410-1420, Tupaliče*), chequered (*The Last Supper, ar. 1400, Sv. Lovrenc nad Škofjo Loko*) or striped (*Herod's Feast, ar. 1525-1530, Sv. Janez ob Bohinjskem jezeru*). The edges of the cloths were usually decorated with fringes.

#### COOKING AND STORING VESSELS

An important place in every human dwelling is no doubt the kitchen. First there is the form of a **fireplace**, shown as an elevated fireplace in the form of a wooden box filled with earth (*Christ's Jesus' Birth, 1494-1500, Krtina pri Domžalah; Christ's Jesus' Birth, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

A fireplace needed a hood (*The Adoration of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 27). Bellows were pressed and released to fan the fire (*The Suffering of St. John the Evangelist, ar. 1450-1455, Mošnje*) (Fig. 28).

**Fig. 28: *The Suffering of St. John the Evangelist, ar. 1450-1455, Mošnje (detail).***

**Sl. 28: *Mučeništvo sv. Janeza Evangelista, ok. 1450-1455, Mošnje (detajl).***

The **fireplace crane** from which cooking vessels and kettles were suspended, had a central spiral rod-like section and a billet hook (*Adam and Eve working, 1490, Hrastovlje*). Among the fireplace-irons was a poker with a handle and a rectangular hook-shaped catch (*The Journey of the Magi – The Cook, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

Kitchens were equipped with various cooking and storing vessels. As far as the surviving objects are concerned, we have to repeat that no vessels made of wood have come to us. Vessels of unglazed ceramics, however, have. Throughout the centuries all these vessels saw few changes in their forms, but the forms always depended on the functions of the vessels, as we can see from the frescoes. Fragments of these vessels have been found at archaeological sites dating from the Late Middle Ages.

A **pan** as a low round vessel with a long and relatively wide handle can be seen in a detail of a scene (*Mary's Adoration of the Infant Jesus, 1453, Crngrob*) (Fig. 29), where St. Joseph's pap boils over in a pan. **Trivets**, very common in the Middle Ages, had a round or pouch-shaped body and a long handle (*The Suffering of St. John the Baptist, ar. 1450-1455, Mošnje*). **Pots** with handles were, among others, made of ceramic (*Adam and Eve working, 1490, Hrastovlje*) (Fig. 30). Among the metal kettles are painted vessels of round or cylindrical forms and they are bigger than the pots (*Adoration of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

The pictorial sources show **ladles** and their functions; their forms have not seen essential changes for millennia (*Jesus' Birth, 1453, Crngrob; The Journey of the Magi, ar. 1490, Gradišče; The Journey of the Magi, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*).

**Fig. 30: Adam and Eve Working, 1490, Hrastovlje (detail).**

**Sl. 30: Adam in Eva pri delu, 1490, Hrastovlje (detajl).**

**Gourds** – ceramic, wooden and metal ones were used – are classified as storing vessels. The pictorial sources faithfully illustrate that they were used to carry drinks and that their contents served to quench one's thirst. Round and flat gourds therefore appear in genre scenes of *The Journey of the Magi* (Sv. Miklavž nad Čadramom, ar. 1390; Pangrč grm, ar. 1390-1400; Bled, ar. 1455; Šentjanž nad Dravčami, ar. 1455; Mače, 1467; Gradišče pri Divači, ar. 1490; Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom, 1504).

Santonino also has a reference to this specific object when he feels sorry for a man "who has made the entire arduous journey up and down without a horse and even without a gourd over his shoulder to refresh himself, and was a true martyr" (Vale, 1943, 149).

Small **barrels** usually were made of wood, only occasionally of earthenware, and they were carried hung on leather straps. Some of them were furnished with a string to carry them attached to a belt (*The Miracle at the Grave of St. Nicholas, 1470-1475, Goropeč nad Ihanom*) (Fig. 31).

**Fig. 29: Mary's Adoration of the Infant Jesus, 1453, Crngrob (detail).**

**Sl. 29: Marijino čaščenje Jezusa, 1453, Crngrob (detajl).**

**Fig. 31: The Miracle at the Grave of St. Nicholas, 1470-1475, Goropeč nad Ihanom (detail).**

**Sl. 31: Čudež ob grobu sv. Miklavža, 1470-1475, Goropeč nad Ihanom (detajl).**

**Fig. 32: St. Dorothy, between 1424 and 1426, Ptujška gora (detail).**

**Sl. 32: Sv. Doroteja, med 1424 in 1426, Ptujška gora (detajl).**

Making and using wicker vessels belongs to the cultures of all times. Among the material preserved from the Middle Ages there are no wicker objects.

The illustrations of St. Dorothy show her attribute, a **wicker basket**. The pictorial sources illustrate two types of woven baskets: baskets with a spherical body (*St. Dorothy, between 1424 and 1426, Ptujška gora* (Fig. 32); *St. Dorothy, 1453, Crngrob*; *St. Dorothy, 1455-1460, Vrh nad Želimljem*; *St. Dorothy, 1480-1490, Senično*) and baskets with a cylindrical body (*St. Dorothy, 1459, Kamni vrh nad Ambrusom*; *St. Dorothy, 1465-1470, Mirna na Dolenjskem*; *March and September, 1490, Hrastovlje, Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*). The illustrations reveal vertical and diagonal weave patterns.

All the classes of society in the Middle Ages continually used wooden vessels, but, of course, none have survived.

Wooden **troughs** were meant for kneading dough, but they were also used for other purposes. In one of the paintings (*Still-life with Figs, ar. 1410-1420, Breg pri Predvoru*) (Fig. 33) the form of a trough is imitated by a tray with figs. Troughs were rectangular, with a shallowly hollowed centre and raised edges, which were bevelled.

**Fig. 33: Still-life with Figs, 1410-1420, Breg pri Predvoru (detail).**

**Sl. 33: Tihožitje s figami, 1410-1420, Breg pri Predvoru (detajl).**

**Fig. 34: Mary in the Temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detail).**

**Sl. 34: Marija v templju, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom (detajl).**

The frescoes also show large barrels (*Crucifixion with the donor's family, 1430-1440, Ptuj*; *St. Nicholas calms the storm, between 1424 and 1426, Ptujška gora*).

The depicted **tubs** are small wooden vessels, fixed with hoops. They may be rather high and narrow and have only one ear (*St. Florian, third third of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, Bukovica*) or they are low and wide and have two ears (*Mary's Adoration of the Infant Jesus, 1455-1460, Vrh nad Želimljami*; *The Journey of the Magi, 1467, Mače*).

Enclosure **boxes** were used for storing various objects from the Middle Ages to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. To date an enclosure box of elliptical shape has been found in only one painting (*Mary in the Temple, 1504, Sv. Primož nad Kamnikom*) (Fig. 34).

#### OBJECTS FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE

Among the objects for personal hygiene we may classify water basins, baths-tubs and towels, which can all be found in the frescoes. In the Middle Ages washing-cabinets were used which, however, cannot be traced in our pictorial sources. They consisted of two cupboards, one above the other and joined at the back. In between a water jug was suspended, and the top part of the bottom cupboard contained a small washbasin. Such washing-cabinets have been kept in the National Museum of Slovenia and in the Ptuj Regional Museum (*Gotika v Sloveniji, 1995, cat. no. 2. 1. 4*).

Water **bowls** were usually turned. The bowls illustrated in the paintings widen from the bottom to the rim (*Christ before Pilate, ar. 1440-1445, Srednja vas pri Šenčurju*) or have a smooth body and an everted rim (*The Miracle at the grave of St. Nicholas, 1470-1475, Goropeč nad Ihanom*). Wooden **bath-tubs** were tied together with bands (*Holy Sunday – Bathing, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob*) (Fig. 35).

allowed himself to be scrubbed gently by her white and soft hands..." (Vale, 1943, 160). At the house of master Stefan Lengholzer, the vicar in Berg, Santonino mentions a bathroom with a wooden tub (Vale, 1943, 169).

**The towels** in the paintings are white (*Mary's Adoration of the Infant Jesus, 1455-1469, Vrh nad Želimljem*) and usually ornamented. The ornaments are either plain cross bands with decorative fields filled out with slanted lines and rows of toppled squares (*Adam and Eve working, 1490, Hrastovlje*) or they may merely consist of ornamental lines (*Still-life with plate, 1490, Hrastovlje*). The towels are usually fringed.

## CONCLUSION

The above survey lets us summarise that in addition to conveying their basic religious messages late medieval frescoes enable us to understand the wider cultural message of the period in which they originated. Reading and understanding these messages brings us closer to the spirit of the time – the Late Middle Ages.

We are, of course, aware that no illustration of an object, no matter how faithful it is, proves that the object really existed. In our search for the image of the past we may thus have come closer to what André Malraux called "the imaginary museum".

**Fig. 35: Holy Sunday-Bathing, ar. 1455-1460, Crngrob (detail).**

**Sl. 35: Sveta Nedelja, ok. 1455-1460, Crngrob (detajl).**

Santonino's description of his adventures at Prižank Castle reveals an interesting period custom. In the evening lord Georg Vend invited Santonino to share a bath with him to clean himself of the dirt from the long journey. A little later – and as Santonino interpreted it – "at the master's order" – the noble lady Barbara Flaschberger, the daughter of the lord of Flaschberg Castle and Vend's wife, aged twenty and extremely beautiful, entered the room. "After Santonino's initial objections, he

## SLIKOVNI VIRI ZA PREDMETE BIVALNIH NOTRANJŠČIN NA SREDNJEVEŠKIH FRESKAH V SLOVENIJI

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### POVZETEK

*Slikovni viri pomenijo dopolnitev interdisciplinarnih raziskav predmetov, ki so bili v obdobju poznega srednjega veka del opreme bivalnih notranjščin. Tako iz njih ne spoznavamo le posameznih vrst predmetov, ampak tudi njihove različne oblike. To še posebno velja za pohištvo, s katerim nas slikovni viri seznanjajo prek različnih oblik klopi, stolov, postelj in zibelk. Poleg tega so slikovni viri skorajda edino gradivo, ki pričča o dragocenem posodju iz tega časa. Kar zadeva namizno posodje in kuhinjske pripomočke, smo lahko primerjali nekatere izmed upodobljenih predmetov z ohranjenimi primerki: kozarce, steklenice, vrče. S številnimi drugimi predmeti, posebno lesenimi, takšna primerjava ni bila mogoča, saj se preprosto niso ohranili.*

*Pomen slikovnih virov lahko povzamemo z naslednjimi ugotovitvami: pomagajo nam dokumentirati in določiti značilne oblike predmetov, ki so se pojavljali v poznem srednjem veku; na osnovi upodobljenih predmetov je mogoče identificirati značilne oblike posameznih predmetov; slikovni viri omogočajo dokumentiranje predmetov, ki se niso ohranili v muzejskih zbirkah; za številne predmete pa nedvomno velja, da se jih je ohranilo bistveno več na upodobitvah kot originalnih predmetov.*

**Ključne besede:** predmeti, bivalne notranjščine, slikovni viri, freske, Slovenija, pozni srednji vek

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