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“Bidden barmhertigen got vor...”: Some Remarks on Art Foundations and Their Prices in Late Medieval Gdańsk

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In the Middle Ages, regardless of whether a work of art was a serial product or a commission, it was a collective creation. The subject, form and content of cheap prints, panel paintings and sculptures intended for private use were all determined to a significant extent by the market of anonymous potential purchasers and their financial resources, religious needs, and aesthetic sensitivities.¹ Complex structures such as retables or large-size Passion groups that had to be adapted to a particular context, or epitaphs or tombstones that had to have individual features – all these works of art tended to be commissioned.² The role of founder very often went far beyond the financial aspect. The founder usually specified the iconographic program of a work, and sometimes also its form, by indicating a model. They required that their foundation should contain some information about them in the form of an inscription, coat of arms, motif, or portrait. All of these elements fulfilled certain functions. First of all, they identified the owner of the work. Secondly, they commemorated its commissioner, not only in a historical dimension, but also in an eschatological sense – they were intended to move beholders to say prayers in the intention of the deceased

¹ Berit Wagner, *Bilder ohne Auftraggeber. Der deutsche Kunsthandel im 15. und frühen 16. Jahrhundert. Mit Überlegungen zum Kulturtransfer*, Petersberg 2014.

² Corine Schleif, *Donatio et memoria. Stifter, Stiftungen und Motivationen an Beispielen aus Lorenzkirche in Nürnberg*, München 1990; Daniela Gräfin von Pfeil, Gerhard Weilandt, *Auftraggeber und Stifter in der Ulmer Kunst* [in:] *Meisterwerke massenhaft. Die Bildhauerwerkstatt des Niklaus Weckmann und die Malerei in Ulm um 1500*, Hg. Württembergischen Landesmuseum Stuttgart, Stuttgart 1993, pp. 339–405; Hans-Rudolf Meier, Carola Jäggi, Philippe Büttner, *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn. Stifter und Auftraggeber in mittelalterlichen Kunst. Beate Brenk zum 60. Geburtstag*, Berlin 1995.

founder to save his soul from eternal damnation. Thus the founder was moved by both religious and worldly motives.³ The work of art commissioned by them was an expression of affiliation with their community, but at the same time a manifestation of their particular interests.

“Bidden barmhertigen got vor...”

Art foundations were, of course, closely related to financial effort, which was sometimes out of the reach even of very rich patrons. Some ventures, such as huge retables, could be very expensive for the broader community as well. Sometimes it was a one-off cost, but in other cases, such as retables, the expense was sustained over time and additional outgoings were needed. If a retable was to serve its purpose, for instance, the founder also had to hire a priest to serve at the altar. They then had to purchase liturgical vestments and *vasa sacra*, and ensure a regular supply of wine for the mass, and candle wax.⁴ Sacral art foundations were a type of investment calculated to benefit a patron in religious (bringing them salvation), prestigious, representative and aesthetic terms simultaneously.

The above issues will be analysed in this paper on the basis of examples from Gdańsk (Danzig). The formula “Bidden barmhertigen got vor...” (“Take into thy care, O merciful God...”) quoted in its title recurs on three Late Gothic sacral artworks in Gdańsk. It is followed by the name of the work’s founder, who is asking the Lord for protection. This formula intimates the aim of the foundation, but it does not explain all the reasons behind this kind of venture. Below, I set out to demonstrate these reasons, and to show what, and in what manner, a work of art said about its founder. I shall also elaborate on the costs of such commissions.

Almost all social groups were involved in sacral art foundations in Gdańsk. In late medieval Europe, retables of high altars were usually founded by the whole community.⁵ Gdańsk was no exception to this rule. The high altar retable in the Church of Our Lady was created in 1510–1517 by Michel of Augsburg (fig. 1).⁶ This polyptych has three openings. The most ceremonial of them is

³ Piotr Oliński, *Fundacje mieszczańskie w miastach pruskich w okresie średniowiecza i na progu czasów nowożytnych (Chełmno, Toruń, Elbląg, Gdańsk, Królewiec, Braniewo)*, Toruń 2008, pp. 19–27.

⁴ See e.g. data from the 15th century concerning the cost of endowing the side chapel of the family von Diesbach in Bern collegiate church. The total cost was ca. 2,500 florins. The largest part of that figure was the prebend, at 1,000 fl., then items including the chapel’s construction – 800 fl., a stone house for the priest – 240 fl.; the retable and liturgical vestments cost ca. 100–200 fl., while stalls, chalice, antependium, tablecloths and books came to ca. 110–280 fl. The total cost was equivalent to that of 10 houses in Bern; Peter Jezler, *La fondation d’une chapelle privée et les oeuvres d’art qu’elle implique* [in:] *Iconoclasm. Vie et mort de l’image médiévale*, édité. Cécile Dupeux et al., Zurich 2001, pp. 210–211.

⁵ Michael Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors of Renaissance Germany*, New Haven–London 1980, p. 86.

⁶ There is an abundance of literature on the retable of the high altar in the Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk. For this reason I mention only some of the most recent studies concerning this Gdańsk work, where the reader will find a full list of previous publications: Andrzej



Fig. 1. Michel of Augsburg, Retable of the main altar, 1510–1517, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Wozniński

Wozniński, *Późnogotycka rzeźba drewniana na Pomorzu Wschodnim*, PhD dissertation, Institute of Art History, Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poznań 1996, pp. 83–113, Cat. 90; *idem*, *Michał z Augsburga, Mistrz Paweł i epilog gotyckiej rzeźby gdańskiej*, “Rocznik Historii Sztuki” 2002, t. 27, pp. 6–35; Bożena Noworyta-Kuklińska, *Triumphus Mariae Ecclesiae. Retabulum ołtarza głównego kościoła Najświętszej Panny Maryi w Gdańsku*, Lublin 2003; *eadem*, *Prædicationis tabularis. Obrazowe kazanie o tryumfie Maryi Eklezji na retabulum ołtarza głównego kościoła Mariackiego w Gdańsku*, Lublin 2006; Andrzej Wozniński, *W świetle gwiazd. Sztuka i astrologia w Gdańsku w latach 1450–1550* (“Gedania Artistica”, t. 2), Gdańsk 2011, pp. 77–160; *idem*, *O nietypowych cechach nastawy ołtarzowej Michała z Augsburga w kościele Mariackim w Gdańsku*, “Porta Aurea. Rocznik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego” 2013, t. 12, pp. 24–43; *idem*, *Monochromatyczne obrazy na retabulum ołtarza głównego w kościele Mariackim w Gdańsku. Geneza i znaczenie, Procesy przemian w sztuce średniowiecznej. Przełom – regres – innowacja – tradycja. Studia z historii sztuki*, red. Rafał Eysymontt, Romuald Kaczmarek, Warszawa 2014, pp. 253–267; *idem*, *In the Melting Pot of Different Traditions, Styles, and Tastes: Gothic Panel Painting in Gdańsk* [in:] *New Studies in Medieval and Renaissance Gdańsk, Poland and Prussia*, ed. Beata Możejko, Routledge 2017, pp. 155–156; *idem*, *Programy obrazowe późnogotyckich retabulów w Prusach. O powtarzających się tematach, chronologii scen, obecności fundatora w dziele i archaizmach ikonograficznych* [in:] *Caritas et Consonantia. Funkcje, formy i znaczenia w sztuce średniowiecza. Księga poświęcona pamięci Kingi Szczepkowskiej-Naliwajek w dziesiątą rocznicę śmierci*, red. Monika Jakubek-Raczkowska, Juliusz Raczkowski, Toruń–Warszawa 2017, pp. 538–539, 545–547; *idem*, *Malarstwo i rzeźba w Gdańsku u progu epoki nowożytnej. Pomiędzy tradycją a nowoczesnością, między Północą a Południem* [in:] *Gdańsk w okresie nowożytnym. Kultura, religia, polityka, społeczeństwo i stosunki międzynarodowe*, red. Wiesław Długokęcki, Jürgen Sarnowsky, Gdańsk 2021, pp. 32–38.

filled with sculptures showing the Heavenly Glory of Mary, amid the hosts of angels and saints that once populated the wings. The figures of saints, non-extant since 1577, were made of silver. The reverses of the inner wings are decorated with relief scenes from the life of Mary. The retable has two pairs of wings, each painted on both sides; the inner wings were movable, while the outer were not. The painted decoration included scenes from the lives of Mary and Jesus, figures of the prophets, mythological and allegorical characters, and personifications of virtues and the planets. Nearly all the carvings and painted scenes in the Gdańsk retable are based on engravings by Upper German Masters: Albrecht Dürer, Hans Burgkmair and Hans Schäufelein.⁷

“Bidden barm-
hertigen got
vor...”

The closest analogy to the Gdańsk retable, above all in terms of the number and placement of the silver statues, was the retable from the high altar in the Church of Our Lady in Lübeck, completed in 1425 and known from several preserved fragments, descriptions, and photographs.⁸

The city government, the Church, guilds, confraternities, and private individuals alike participated in the enormous costs of the Gdańsk retable.⁹ The foundation of this work had not only religious goals. The retable also had to deliver “secular satisfactions”¹⁰ to its patrons. That foundation was an expression of pride in the Gdańsk community and its rivalry with other cities, not only in Prussia. The words of one Gdańsk chronicler referring to this retable: “ein schönes subtiles und kunstreiches werk” (“beautiful, subtle and artful work”),¹¹ “welcher gleichen

⁷ Andrzej Woźniński, *On the Role of Engravings in Late Gothic Sculpture in Prussia* [in:] *Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte im Baltikum. Studien zur Kunstgeschichte Kurlands* (“Homburger Gespräch”, Bd. 25), Kiel 2009, pp. 12–14 (here earlier literature on this subject).

⁸ Uwe Albrecht, *Auf den Spuren eines verlorenen Denkmalensembles. Die spätgotische Chorausstattung der Lübecker Marienkirche* [in:] *Kunst und Liturgie. Choranlagen des Spätmittelalters – ihre Architektur, Ausstattung und Nutzung*, Hg. Anna Morath-Fromm, Memmingen 2003, pp. 116–125; *Corpus der mittelalterlichen Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei in Schleswig-Holstein*, Bd. 1: *Hansestadt Lübeck, St. Annen-Museum*, Hg. Uwe Albrecht et al., Kiel 2005, pp. 137–143, cat. 31; Jan Friedrich Richter, *Das mittelalterliche Hochaltarretabel der Lübecker Marienkirche*, “Zeitschrift des Vereins für Lübeckische Geschichte” 2014, Bd. 94, pp. 9–38; *idem*, *Das Hochaltarretabel der Lübecker Marienkirche. Rekonstruktion und künstlerischer Kontext* [in:] *Palmarum 1942. Neue Forschungen zu zerstörten Werken mittelalterlicher Holzskulptur und Tafelmalerei aus der Lübecker St. Marienkirche. Tagungsband und Ausstellungsdokumentation*, Hg. Uwe Albrecht, Ulrike Nürnberger, Kiel 2015, pp. 73–96; *idem*, *Lübeck und der Westen* [in:] *Lübeck 1500. Kunstmetropole im Ostseeraum*, Petersburg 2015, pp. 67–68, fig. 6.2; Joseph Salvatore Ackley, *Precious-Metal Figural Sculpture, Medium, and Mimesis in the Late Middle Ages* [in:] *Faces of Charisma: Image, Text, Object in Byzantium and the Medieval West* (“Explorations in Medieval Culture”, vol. 9), eds. Brigitte Miriam Bedos-Rezak, Martha Dana Rust, Leiden–Boston 2018, pp. 377–380. On the close relationship between the Gdańsk and Lübeck retables see: Woźniński, *O nietypowych cechach...*, pp. 35–37; *idem*, *Malarstwo i rzeźba...*, pp. 32–38.

⁹ Theodor Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien in Danzig in ihren Denkmälern und ihren Beziehungen zum kirchlichen Leben Danzig*, vol. 1–2, Danzig 1843–1847, pp. 443, note 1, 445.

¹⁰ Term coined in: Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, p. 78.

¹¹ *Christoph Beyers des ältern Dantziger Chronik* [in:] *Scriptores rerum prussiacarum*, Bd. 5, Hg. Theodor Hirsch, Max Töppen, Ernst Strehlke, Leipzig 1889, p. 459.

nie gesehen ist” (“the like of which has never been seen”),¹² seem to reflect that pride.

It is significant that the Gdańsk retable by Michel of Augsburg was set on the high altar little more than 40 years after the previous retable, made between 1473 and 1476, had been installed there. We know very little about the form of the earlier piece, and nothing about the reasons for its replacement by the new work. It was surely not some sort of temporary retable, because in the 1616 Chronicle of the Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, Eberhard Bötticher mentions a parchment book (“Pergament Buchlein”), written in 1484, in which all items belonging to the high altar and to the St Anne altar were listed. This inventory enumerated a variety of paraments, as well as silver images belonging to the high altar: “Wie auch silbern Bilder zu dem hohen Altar gehorig etc., wie in demselben Buchlein in specie zu sehen”, (“As well as silver images belonging to the high altar etc., as can be seen in the same booklet in specie”).¹³ The possibility that at least some of the silver images in the retable by Michel of Augsburg could have come from the old retable should therefore be taken into consideration. In several periods, including the late Middle Ages, the inclusion of older elements in new retables was not an isolated phenomenon.¹⁴ Perhaps the Gdańsk retable made in 1473–1476 reflected the structure and components of the Lübeck piece, but it is also possible that the retable by Michel of Augsburg to some extent references the previous work from the same church in exhibiting precious silver images.

The Gdańsk and the Lübeck retables have one more feature in common. As Jan Friedrich Richter has said, the silver figures in the Lübeck retable would probably have been commissioned individually over successive decades.¹⁵ Something very similar is also true for the Gdańsk retable. As Bötticher informs us in his chronicle, in 1519 – two years after the completion of the work – five silver figures were

¹² Archiwum Państwowe w Gdańsku [hereinafter: APG], ms 300. R/LI/1, Georg Melmann, *Chronica des landes Preussen. Anno 1548*, p. 805.

¹³ *Chronik der Marienkirche in Danzig. Das »Historische Kirchen Register« von Eberhard Bötticher (1616). Transkription und Auswertung / Kronika kościoła Mariackiego w Gdańsku. »Historisches Kirchen Register« Eberharda Böttichera (1616). Transkrypcja i analiza*, Hg. Christopher Herrmann, Edmund Kizik, Köln–Weimar–Wien 2013, pp. 46, 372.

¹⁴ Theodor Müller, *Frühe Beispiele der Retrospektive in der deutschen Plastik*, “Sitzungsberichte – Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Philosophisch-Historische Klasse” 1961, Bd. 1, pp. 3–25; Bernhard Decker, *Das Ende des mittelalterlichen Kultbildes und die Plastik Hans Leinbergers*, Bamberg 1985, pp. 114–124; Hans Belting, *Bild und Kult. Eine Geschichte des Bildes vor dem Zeitalter der Kunst*, München 1990, pp. 483–496; Klaus Graf, *Retrospective Tendenzen in der bildenden Kunst vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert. Kritische Überlegungen aus der Perspektive des Historikers* [in:] *Mundus in imagine. Bildersprache und Lebenswelten im Mittelalter. Festgabe für Klaus Schreiner*, Hg. Andrea Löther, München 1996, pp. 389–420 (here further literature).

¹⁵ Richter, *Das mittelalterliche Hochaltarretabel...*, pp. 11–14. Richter’s hypothesis is confirmed by information that in 1465 the goldsmith Kluver was paid for an image for the Lübeck retable of the high altar in the Marienkirche; Jan von Bonsdorff, *Kunstproduktion und Kunstverarbeitung im Ostseeraum des Spätmittelalters*, Helsinki–Helsingfors 1993, p. 130.

purchased for that retable for the sum of about 1,000 marks.¹⁶ It is also noteworthy that in 1524 a new brass chandelier in the shape of a crown was hung in front of the retable.¹⁷

“Bidden barm-
hertigen got
vor...”

Perhaps the previous Gdańsk retable was becoming too small to house the silver figures being commissioned by individual founders. Perhaps the Gdańsk community, one of the richest and most powerful on the Baltic coast, had come to the conclusion that it should be represented by a more spectacular piece of art. We can also not rule out other reasons for such rapid replacement of the piece.

It is striking that in the work by the Upper German artist Michel of Augsburg, who was aware of the latest artistic solutions and models from his own region, some elements were of quite different provenance. Perhaps the form of the Gdańsk retable was the result of the founders' decision. They may have wanted to have something modern but at the same time familiar to Gdańsk worshippers, whose tastes were shaped above all by northern traditions. Maybe that is why the Gdańsk retable echoes the Lübeck piece.¹⁸

Another monumental work of art in the same church – the astronomical clock, 1464–1470 (fig. 2), by the master Hans Düringer from Toruń (Thorn) – was probably also founded by the Gdańsk community. An argument supporting this hypothesis is the fact that the work was commissioned by the churchwardens (*vitrici*) from the Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, and Heinrich Hatekannen, perhaps a representative of the city council. The participation of the city council in this foundation is suggested by another fact: that the city council covered the maintenance costs for the astronomical clock.¹⁹ The huge, 14.3-metre-high construction, was built in the northern arm of the transept.²⁰ The work has a three-storey

¹⁶ *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, pp. 86, 397.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 93, 208, note 20. The editors of the chronicle – Christofer Herrmann and Edmund Kizik – appear to have erroneously read the passus: “Item kostett die Crone vor den hohen Altare new zu machen, im Chore hangende, IC LXXIX Marck III Schil. ohne IIII Centner XVI Pfund Messing, die noch daruber sein, und die Schliessung oben wiget also zusamen VI Centner weniger XII Pfund, ohne das Bilde, den Knopf und die Crone daruber”, taking it as information about the foundation of a new crown for the figure of St. Mary in the crowning of the retable.

¹⁸ There were more similar instances in late medieval Gdańsk of the active shaping of an imported work by its founder. An example is the retable of St Dorothy from around 1430–1440 in Our Lady's Church. Its carved alabaster part was imported from England, while the painted wings with a cycle dedicated to St Dorothy, containing visual allusions to the founder, were created in Gdańsk. This and other similar examples from Gdańsk, see: Gerhard Weiland, *Transferkultur – Danzig im Spätmittelalter* [in:] *Original – Kopie – Zitat. Kunstwerke des Mittelalters und der Frühen Neuzeit: Wege der Aneignung – Formen der Überlieferung* (“Veröffentlichungen des Zentralinstituts für Kunstgeschichte in München”, Bd. 26), Hg. Wolfgang Augustyn, Ulrich Söding, Passau 2010, pp. 80–82.

¹⁹ *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, pp. 28–29, 207.

²⁰ Andrzej Wozniński, *Wokół zagadnień formy, programu ikonograficznego i treści zegara astronomicznego w kościele Panny Marii w Gdańsku*, “Porta Aurea. Rocznik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego” 2010, t. 9, pp. 5–44; *idem*, *W świetle gwiazd...*, pp. 43–76.



Fig. 2. Astronomical clock, 1464–1470, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Woźniński

structure and is surmounted by a crowning part. The lower part contains a calendar, the middle one a planetarium, and the upper one and the crowning piece together form a kind of stage for the movable figures. In its iconographic programme, the Gdańsk astronomical clock seems to have addressed in shorthand the idea of the unity of macrocosm and microcosm. The “Mundus minor” is represented by personifications of the temperaments with their connections to the four elements, the ages of human life, the seasons, and symbolic images of the vegetative cycles. It is simultaneously combined with the macrocosm as represented by the constellations of the Zodiac, a starlit sky, and the Sun and the Moon in the middle part of the clock. The themes of sin, redemption, and the end of the world are incorporated into this cosmological programme using a specific typology. The Gdańsk clock was thus a metaphor for the universe. It carried the message that the Cosmos and the Earth are works of God; and time

is a divine gift managed by the Creator, who watches over the Earth and over the movements of the Universe. Its scale, form and decoration prove conclusively that the foundation of the work was ordained not only by practical motives. Didactic reasons, a desire to render the church interior more attractive, but also prestige and rivalry with other churches may have been significant factors. Despite having been written over a century after the work was constructed, Martin Gruneweg’s words are probably an accurate reflection of the founders’ intentions: “What greater marvels can the famous Prague clock have than that which stands by the sacristy in this church. Like that one, this not only shows every day throughout the year, the rising and setting of the sun and moon, the course of the planets and the twelve celestial signs through all the hours, and the subtler movements of the heavenly bodies, but it also has an annual calendar of movable feasts, informing priests in simple terms of the dates of fasting, feasts and prayers in the Church, and it also has at the top, under the bells, carved images that appear at a certain hour on Sundays and holidays to show scenes from the Gospels, arousing the delight of the people. Some of the figures come out before the beginning, calling the people to the show with the sound of trumpets, as

in Olomouc, Moravia, or the rooster in Strasbourg”.²¹ Also of significance is the fact that a number of its aspects: its structure, size, components, and location in the church, relate this particular clock to similar ones of its kind made at the turn of the fourteenth century on the Baltic coast in Rostock (1379; rebuilt 1472), Doberan (1390), Stralsund (1394), Stendal (early 15th century) Lübeck (1405–1407), Lund (c. 1410–1420) and Wismar (c. 1435?).²² The Gdańsk clock was the latest among them. It is quite possible that with this foundation, the Gdańsk community wanted to emphasize symbolically that the city was one of these most important centres on the Baltic coast. The highly prestigious status of this foundation is also reflected in the very high salary paid to Düringer, including the house at Heilige-Geist-Gasse that was made available to him.²³

“Bidden barm-
hertzigem got
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Most sacral artworks were commissions by confraternities and guilds. At the turn of the sixteenth century, nearly all the Old Town guilds had altars in St Catherine’s Church.²⁴ In the Church of Our Lady, the guilds of tailors, butchers, carriers and others had retables on the altars in their chapels. Artworks were also founded by families and individuals, among them high-ranking officials such as the mayor and councillors, and representatives of another very important profession in the town: the skippers. Guilds, secular and spiritual confraternities, and patrician families owned side altars in Gdańsk churches, but we have little precise evidence in this area. It is difficult to tell how credible Ephraim Praetorius’ account from around 1700 is. He reports that there were originally 48 altars in the Church of Our Lady, 20 in St John’s Church, 19 in St Nicholas’ Church, 15 in the Church of the Holy Trinity, and 13 in St Bridget’s Church.²⁵ Precise or not, these figures nonetheless give some idea of the numbers of art

²¹ “Was mag der berühmte Pragische seher in sich wunderliches haben über den, welcher an der Dreßkammer in dieser Kirche steth. Welches jenem gleich weiseth, nicht alleine der Sonnen, des Mondes auf und niedergang alle tag durchs gantze jar, der planeten und tzwelf himelischen tzeichenn lauf durch alle stunden, samt mehr subtiler bewegunge der himmelischen Lichter, sondern auch den Kalender samt den beweglichen Fest tagen durchs gantze jahr, durch welchen die Priester leichtte erfueren der Fasten, der Feirtage zeit unde das kirchen gebethe. An welchen auch oben unter der glocken des Sontages und sonst Festtages geschnittene bilder herfuer kamen unde das Ewangeliium desselbigen tages zu gewisser stunde mit gnug verwunderunge des folckes figurirten. Untter welchen bilderlein tratten etliche vor dem anfang herfuer unde lockeden das folk zum Schaw spiele durch trometlein, so zugerichttet wie jene zu Olmitz in Meerheern oder Haen zu Straßburg”; *Die Aufzeichnungen des Dominikaners Martin Gruneweg (1562–ca. 1618) über seine Familie in Danzig, seine Handelsreisen in Osteuropa und sein Klosterleben in Polen* (“Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien”, Bd. 19), Hg. Almut Bues, Bd. 1–4, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 272.

²² Manfred Schukowski, *Die Astronomische Uhr Die Astronomische Uhr in St. Marien zu Rostock*, Mitarb. Wolfgang Erdmann, Kristina Hegner, Königstein im Taunus 1992, pp. 9–12; *idem*, *Wunder Uhren. Astronomische Uhren in Kirchen der Hansezeit*, Schwerin 2006.

²³ *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, pp. 28–29.

²⁴ Paul Simson, *Geschichte der Stadt Danzig*, Bd. 1, Danzig 1913–1917, p. 382.

²⁵ Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Ms. Boruss. Fol. 267, Efraim Praetorius, *Das evangelische Danzig – vorstellend den Lebenslauff aller evangelischen Lehrer in Dantzig*, Bd. 1, n. p.; Katarzyna Cieślak, *Między Rzymem, Wittenbergą a Genewą. Sztuka Gdańska jako miasta podzielonego wyznaniowo*,

foundations. The data concerning the Church of Our Lady are most plentiful.²⁶ Marian Kutzner detected an order in the arrangement of the altars here: in his opinion, it would have mirrored the local social hierarchy: the transept would have been reserved for town councillors and sacerdotal confraternities, patrician families' altars would have been located around the choir, and those of guilds in the aisles.²⁷ Space in the Gdańsk church may indeed have been distributed according to this key, though this was not a consistent rule. Proof of this was the altar of St Barbara, founded by the Confraternity of Shoemakers' Apprentices, which was placed in the north transept, adjacent to the eastern wall, between the Holy Cross Chapel and the sacristy.

All altars required appropriate furnishings. Most important of these was the retable. Very few elements of the chapels' original décor that provided the context for these retables have been preserved. Most abundant are those from the St George confraternity chapel in the Church of Our Lady. This was located in the north transept, but the overall space used by the confraternity's members was larger, because the altar stood beside the pillar in front of the chapel, and the adjacent wall also belonged to the confraternity.²⁸ The oldest part of the chapel's décor is the sculpted image of St George on horseback slaying the dragon, which dates from ca. 1410, against a wall painting which completes the composition. Beneath the sculpture there was originally a long, convex board with a painted image of St George slaying the dragon on foot, which was accompanied by the coats of arms of St George and of Gdańsk. On the St George confraternity altar there was also a painted panel with the Holy Trinity, ca. 1420, painted by an artist from the circle of Robert Campin/the Master of Flémalle, though it is unclear when this was added.²⁹ The effigies of King Arthur and the Master of the Teutonic Order – perhaps the founder of the panel – were painted on its reverse. It was

Wrocław 2000, p. 47. Regarding the data on altars in Gdańsk churches in the medieval period and at the beginning of the modern era, see: Oliński, *Fundacje mieszczańskie...*, pp. 243–308, 533–543.

²⁶ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, pp. 356–464.

²⁷ Marian Kutzner, *Die spätmittelalterliche Ausstattung der Marienkirche als Ausdruck der intellektuellen Empfindsamkeit und Religiosität der Danziger Bürger im ausgehenden Mittelalter* [in:] *Die sakrale Backsteinarchitektur des südlichen Ostseeraums: Der theologische Aspekt*, Hg. Gerhard Eimer, Ernst Gierlich, Berlin 2000, p. 144.

²⁸ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 430; Willy Drost, *Die Marienkirche in Danzig und ihre Kunstschatze*, Stuttgart 1963, p. 133. Regarding the original décor of the St George confraternity chapel, see: Stephan Selzer, *Artushöfe im Ostseeraum. Ritterlich-höfische Kultur in den Städten des Preußenlandes im 14. und 15. Jahrhundert* ("Kieler Werkstücke", Reihe D: "Beiträge zur europäischen Geschichte des späten Mittelalters", Bd. 8), Frankfurt am Main 1996, pp. 110, 113–115; *idem*, *Confraternities of Knights in Prussia and their Art Foundations in the Late Middle Ages and Early Modern Era*, "Progress: Journal of Young Researchers" 2020, no. 8, pp. 52–55, 58–59.

²⁹ Adam S. Labuda, *O retabulum Trójcy Świętej bractwa św. Jerzego w kościele Mariackim w Gdańsku*, "Porta Aurea. Rocznik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego" 2012, t. 11, pp. 20–66; Stephan Kemperdick, *Dwie tablice Trójcy Świętej z gdańskiego kościoła Mariackiego*, "Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie. Nowa Seria" 2019, t. 7, pp. 148–186.

placed on the predella, which featured the Holy Trinity, St George, and St Maurice (or St Olaf). In 1473, the retable was expanded: the Last Judgement triptych by Hans Memling was placed in the centre of the retable and the former panel probably above it. The work by Memling was looted by Gdańsk privateers from a ship on its way from Bruges to Florence.³⁰ The owners of the ship which brought the painting to Gdańsk – Johann Sidinghusen, Tiedeman Valandt and Heinrich Niederhof – were members of the St George confraternity.³¹ Perhaps they, or other persons from their circle, recognized the exceptional artistic quality of this piece of art and that is why it became the central element of the retable on the altar in the confraternity's chapel. The iconography of the main scene was also significant. The most important person, beside Christ, is the Archangel Michael. He is wearing a gleaming suit of armour and is depicted as a *miles christianus* executing a divine sentence. His image evoked the chivalric ethos upheld by the confraternity very well. Furthermore, in medieval iconography, the Archangel Michael and St George were portrayed in very similar ways, as knights in armour fighting demons.³² In 1504 another member of the confraternity, Georg Angermünde, commissioned a missal for the chapel.³³ Other furnishings from this chapel that have been preserved to this day are the fourteenth-century cope with the St George coat of arms, an embroidered image of St George slaying the dragon from the second half of the fifteenth century; and a funeral cloth, also with the coat of arms of St George.³⁴ There is also an archival record that makes mention of a silver reliquary of St George belonging to this chapel.³⁵ The case of this chapel shows that the furnishings of such places commissioned by a certain community could consist of foundations by individual members.

“Bidden barm-
hertzigen got
vor...”

For the majority of works there are a variety of references to their founders. Some are of a literal nature, with inscriptions and portraits. Sometimes the founder appears in the work indirectly, through the selection of specific topics or motifs. The artist who painted the so-called Jerusalem Triptych in 1497–1500 (fig. 3) for the Priestly Confraternity in the Church of Our Lady included in its central panel a number of scenes – *The Baptism of Christ*, *Christ Teaching in the Temple*, *The Discourse between Jesus and the Samaritan Woman at the Well*, *Apostles carrying Food*, and *The Temptation of Christ* – the contents of which, as Adam S. Labuda noted, are related to Church institutions and the nature of the priesthood.³⁶

³⁰ Beata Możejko, „Peter von Danzig”. *Dzieje wielkiej karaweli 1462–1475*, Gdańsk 2011, p. 198.

³¹ Selzer, *Artushöfe im Ostseeraum...*, p. 115; Możejko, „Peter von Danzig”..., pp. 169–170.

³² Achim Krefling, *St. Michael und St. Georg in ihren geistesgeschichtlichen Beziehungen*, Jena 1937; Sigrid Braunfels-Esche, *Sankt Georg. Legende, Verehrung, Symbol*, München 1976, pp. 119–121.

³³ Selzer, *Artushöfe im Ostseeraum...*, p. 114, note 144.

³⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 114–115.

³⁵ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 430.

³⁶ Adam S. Labuda, *Die Tafelmalerei in Danzig in der zweiten Hälfte des 15. Jahrhunderts*, Hg. Institut für Kunst- und Bildgeschichte der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin 2015,



Fig. 3. So-called Jerusalem Triptych of the Priestly Confraternity, 1497–1500, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Wozniński

An image of a patron saint was the most common reference to a work's founder. In the retable (c. 1515) commissioned by the Confraternity of St Reinhold for its chapel in the Church of Our Lady, the image of St Reinhold appears twice: as a painting on the reverse of external wing, and in the crowning as a sculpture.³⁷

The butchers' guild commissioned for its chapel a Netherlandish retable (c. 1510–1520).³⁸ The main subjects in its iconographic programme are the Passion of Christ and the Mass of St Gregory. This is a standard programme without any references to the founder. The retable was probably made without a predella. In Gdańsk, the imported retable was set on the guild's old predella (c. 1470), which featured scenes of the martyrdom of St Adrian, the patron saint of butchers (fig. 4).³⁹ In this way, a standard imported work was customized to the needs of its commissioners, and adapted to the local tradition of prominent predellas with a particular construction.⁴⁰

The retable founded in ca. 1500 by the Confraternity of Cobblers' Apprentices for the Church of Our Lady displays an exceptionally highly developed

pp. 63–71, cat. 9. On this work, see also: Antoni Ziemia, *Czas i miejsce opowieści w obrazie. Tryptyk Jerozolimski z Gdańska – problemy narracji i ikonografii*, "Rocznik Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie. Nowa Seria" 2013, t. 2, pp. 263–304.

³⁷ Ryszard Szymdki, *Retables anversoises en Pologne. Contribution à l'étude des rapports artistiques entre les anciens Pays-Bas Méridionaux et la région de Gdańsk au début du XVIe siècle*, Brussel 1986, pp. 23–73; Wozniński, *Programy obrazowe...*, pp. 537, 548.

³⁸ Szymdki, *Retables anversoises...*, pp. 105–125.

³⁹ Labuda, *Die Tafelmalerei in Danzig...*, p. 35, cat. 2; Wozniński, *Programy obrazowe...*, pp. 536–537, 543–545.

⁴⁰ Weronika Grochowska, *Ze studiów nad gotyckimi nastawami ołtarzowymi w Gdańsku. O specyficke konstrukcji, ikonografii i funkcji gdańskich predell*, "Porta Aurea. Rocznik Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego" 2015, t. 14, pp. 5–31.



“Bidden barm-
hertzigen got
vor...”

Fig. 4. Predella of St Adrian of the butchers' guild, ca. 1470, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Woźniński

cycle dedicated to St Barbara.⁴¹ St Barbara is not known to have been the patron saint of cobblers. She was commonly recognized as the patron of good death. Maybe the reason for the choice of this saint as patron of the retable was the fact that since 1457 her relics had been kept in the same church.⁴² The figure of St Hedwig holding a pair of shoes depicted on the obverse of the right wing may have been a hint as to the profession of the founders.

Some iconographic programmes contain information on the origin, status, aspirations and important events in the life of the work's founder. Johann Ferber, mayor of Gdańsk in 1479–1501, founded a retable (c. 1480), known as the Large Altar of the Ferbers, for his family chapel in the Church of Our Lady.⁴³ Its original shape testifies to its production in the Lower Rhineland. The Ferbers, who came from Kalkar in the Rhineland, must have been familiar with the art of their home region and appreciated its attractiveness and high quality. It may have been for these or perhaps sentimental reasons (e.g. nostalgia for their homeland) that they chose this artist. The retable corpus featured a sculpted *Calvary* group that echoes Netherlandish models. The obverse of the inner painted wings shows the Ferber family accompanied by St John the Evangelist and St John the Baptist, while the reverse depicted the Annunciation. In ca. 1500, the retable was extended by the addition of fixed external wings and a predella depicting further topics related to the Ferber family (fig. 5). The inclusion in it

⁴¹ Labuda, *Die Tafelmalerei in Danzig...*, pp. 116–118, cat. 18; Woźniński, *In the Melting Pot...*, p. 155; *idem*, *Programy obrazowe...*, pp. 536–537, 543–545.

⁴² Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, pp. 388–389.

⁴³ Labuda, *Die Tafelmalerei in Danzig...*, pp. 46–52, cat. 6; Woźniński, *Programy obrazowe...*, pp. 547–548.



Fig. 5. The Large Altar of the Ferbers, ca. 1480 and 1500, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Wozniński

of Constantine the Great and his mother Helena, whose discoveries in Jerusalem elevated the city to the foremost destination of Christian pilgrimage, commemorated the pilgrimage of the founders' son, Eberhard Ferber, to the Holy Land in 1496–1498. The programme on the predella was unconventional. This part of a retablo usually displayed subjects of eucharistic or ecclesiological significance. The Gdańsk predella, however, features four saints. As shown by A.S. Labuda, they are references to the founder: three of them reference the Ferbers' membership of Gdańsk confraternities (St Reinhold for the Knightly Confraternity; and St Giles and St Sebastian for the Shooting Confraternity), and the fourth, St John the Baptist, was the patron saint of the Ferber family.⁴⁴

In Gdańsk, as elsewhere in Latin Europe, such foundations commemorated and represented their founders. The information about the founder contained in a work was addressed to both celestial and earthly beholders. For the former, the work was a kind of visual prayer on the part of the founder for their soul's

⁴⁴ Labuda, *Die Tafelmalerei in Danzig...*, pp. 47; Wozniński, *Programy obrazowe...*, pp. 547–548.

salvation. This prayer remained effective after their death by means of holy masses for the deceased, which they could pay for in their lifetime. For the earthly beholder, an artwork foundation was an expression of belonging to the local community, but also a tool for “positioning” in the parish, social or professional hierarchy. Of course, an art foundation might also serve catechetical aims and fulfil an aesthetic role not only for the founder but for the whole community. The foundation was an investment which was designed to generate profits in the religious, prestigious and material senses alike. Let us take a look at some Gdańsk examples to show these various purposes of sacral art foundations.⁴⁵

The formula “Bidden barmhertigen got vor...” mentioned at the beginning of this paper can be seen on three pieces of art in Gdańsk: the Holy Rood founded by skipper Hans Notsov in 1482 in the Church of St John (fig. 6),⁴⁶ a work of the same kind founded in 1517 in the Church of Our Lady by councillor Lucas Ketting (fig. 7),⁴⁷

⁴⁵ On the function of church art foundations more generally, see i.a. Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, ch. 3: *Functions...*, pp. 50–93; Meier, Jäggi, Büttner, *Für irdischen Ruhm...*, passim.

⁴⁶ The inscription quoted by Willy Drost on the beam, which was destroyed during the Second World War, ran as follows: “Int iar unns herren M CCCC LXXXII do bleef schipper hans notsovv myt man myt allen biddet got vor syn sele un. vor alle gelouige selen”. It also displayed other, secondary inscriptions, including the renovation dates 1635, 1664, 1694, 1737, 1823; Willy Drost, *Sankt Johann*, Stuttgart 1957, p. 125, figs. 120–124.

⁴⁷ Drost quotes the inscriptions on the destroyed beam during the Second World War:

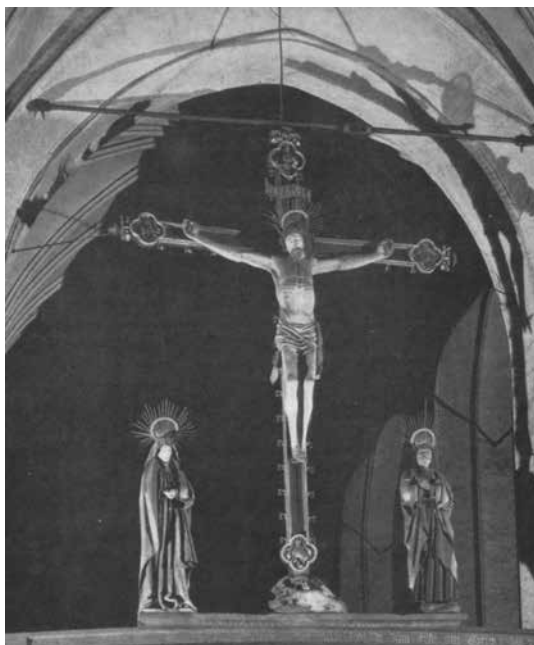


Fig. 6. Passion, 1482, St John's Church in Gdańsk, source: Willy Drost, *Sankt Johann*, Stuttgart 1957



Fig. 7. Master Paul, Passion, 1517, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, source: Willy Drost, *Die Marienkirche in Danzig und ihre Kunstschatze*, Stuttgart 1963



Fig. 8. Michel of Augsburg, St Francis' retable (detail), 1515, the Franciscan Church of the Holy Trinity in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Wozniński

and the St Francis retable founded by Bartolomeus Schulte in 1515 in the Franciscan church (fig. 8).⁴⁸ Though each of the formulas varies slightly, in every one the founder is humbly asking the Lord to protect him. In addition, in the Passion in the St John's Church and the St Francis retable, the commissioners are also asking for divine protection for other believers – in the inscription on the retable, Schulte's wife and family are mentioned too. On the choir side of the beam below the Passion in the Church of Our Lady, the inscription quoted a passage from the Lamentations of Jeremiah expressing compassion for the suffering Lord.⁴⁹ These formulas thus reflect the founders' concern for their own fate, their humility, and their altruism. A different meaning of these inscriptions surfaces if we look at them

“O ir alle die ir geet uber den wegk merk unde szeet ab do ist ennig schmercze alsze meune schmercze” (on the choir side) and “bidt got vor einen lucas ketink, der disse bilde hot lassen machen Im ior MVCXVII” (on the aisle side); Drost, *Die Marienkirche in Danzig...*, pp. 92–93, Taf. 44–49, fig. 29. Theodor Hirsch supplies the information that on the side of the beam with the founder's name, his coat of arms was also visible; Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 363.

⁴⁸ The inscriptions on the wings that refer to the founder read: “Bid. den. barmhertzigem. got. vor. bartolomeus. Schulte” (on the left wing) and “Orthie. sey. Havsfrave. vn. vor. das gantze geschlacht” (on the right wing); Willy Drost, Franz Swoboda, *St. Trinitatis, St. Peter, St. Bartholomäi, St. Barbara, St. Elisabeth, Hl. Geist, Engl. Kapelle, St. Brigitten* (“Kunstdenkmäler der Stadt Danzig”, Bd. 5), Stuttgart 1972, pp. 20–22, Taf. 17–21.

⁴⁹ Jer. I, 12

from the point of view of their location in the church, or their place in the work itself. In this context, we recognize the ostentation of the founders: their names remained visible over the heads of the believers at the entrance to the choir. All those gathered in the aisles of the churches of St John and Our Lady in Gdańsk would see them. The inscription on the St Francis retable is painted on the reverses of the inner wings, beneath images of the kneeling Schulte and his family. Since the external wings are immovable, the opening of the retable with the founders' images would be seen every day, except for the most important feasts, when it was opened fully. Furthermore, the founders are dressed in lavish clothes, characteristic for the Gdańsk patriciate in the late Middle Ages.⁵⁰ Thus these works ostentatiously showcased on the one hand the piety of their founders, but on the other also their social position and wealth.

“Bidden barmhertzigem got vor...”

The works depicted them as an example which might be followed and as citizens to be reckoned with and who had power in the community. Their social standing was also reflected in the form and quality of the works. *The Passion* founded by skipper Notsov is a work of a high standard, with very close stylistic affinities to art from Lübeck,⁵¹ the most powerful art producer on the Baltic Sea coast in the second half of the fifteenth century. It is entirely possible that the figures in the Passion group were imported from this centre. *The Passion* in the Church of Our Lady is by Master Paul, an artist trained in Southern Germany, which was a region of major importance in Late Gothic sculpture.⁵² The St Francis retable was by Michel, a painter who stemmed from one of the most respected artistic circles of the time – that of Augsburg and Nuremberg, cities which were responsible for introducing a number of innovations in Gdańsk.⁵³

Inscriptions including the names of the founders are visible also on the pair of brass candle holders that are an integral part of the retable on the high altar in the Church of Our Lady (fig. 9).⁵⁴ The founders – Jacobus von Werdenn,

⁵⁰ On the attire of the Gdańsk patriciate, see: Adam S. Labuda, *Kleidung als Bedeutungsträger. Zur Zehn-Gebote-Tafel aus der Marienkirche in Danzig* [in:] *Bild/Geschichte. Festschrift für Horst Bredekamp*, Hg. Philine Helas, Maren Polte, Claudia Rückert, Bettina Uppenkamp, Berlin 2007, pp. 413–430.

⁵¹ Woziński, *Późnogotycka rzeźba...*, pp. 48–50, cat. 101.

⁵² *Idem*, *Michał z Augsburga...*, pp. 60–67; *idem*, *Paul (Paweł)* [in:] *De Gruyter Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon. Die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, Bd. 94: *Ostrogović – Pellegrina*, Hg. Andreas Beyer, Bénédice Savoy, Wolfgang Tegethoff, Berlin–Boston 2017, pp. 437–438.

⁵³ *Idem*, *Michael (Michel) von Augsburg* [in:] *De Gruyter Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon. Die Bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, Bd. 89: *Mejchar – Minguzzi*, Hg. Andreas Beyer, Bénédice Savoy, Wolfgang Tegethoff, Berlin–Boston 2016, pp. 311–312; *idem*, *In the Melting Pot...*, pp. 155–158.

⁵⁴ The inscriptions on the left candle holder read: “Jacob von Werdenn ad Christiparem / Virgo coronata estabulis hys numine bino / Spiritus o faueas c(e)lica sera ferat” (inner side), “helf Sancta Anna Selb dritte” (narrow side), “Marcus schulte Ad Christiparem / Fula nitens varys tibi vir: go lucerne figurib(us) / Fac mens authorisemi: net area poli 1517” (outer side); those on the right holder read: “Dirck Falcke ad cristi parem / Aera velut crebris virgo tibi lumine fumant / Fac labor assiduus fulgeat ante deum 1517” (inner side), “Soli gloria deo anno 1517” (narrow side),



Fig. 9. Candle holder on the retable of the main altar, 1517, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Wozniński

Marcus Schulte, Dirck Falcke and Gerlach Kemerer – first of all addressed Mary, emphasizing her virtue and stressing that the work was made for her glory. They asked for her protection, praised God the Father, petitioned St Anne for help, and mentioned Jesus Christ. They stated the date of the completion of the work: 1517. All four founders were churchwardens in the Church of Our Lady, appointed to their posts in 1515. The content of the inscription portrays the founders as humble, pious people – one of them is indicated as the servant of Mary. In this case, as elsewhere, the location of these inscriptions within the church should be taken into account. The founders' names were not visible to all believers as they were in the cases discussed above. Only a small group of worshippers – the priests and servers, who had access to the choir – could see these inscriptions. The foundation brought the four churchwardens immense religious and prestigious benefit: their names were immortalized in the most significant place in the church – on the high altar.

In the first quarter of the sixteenth century, some Netherlandish retables found their way to Gdańsk. Undoubtedly, their commissioners had decided to spend the

“Gerlach kemerer ad Christi parem / Sis mihi presidio morienti maxima virgo 1517 / Structure famulus sum tuus assiduus” (outer side). All inscriptions are quoted with German translations in: Drost, *Die Marienkirche in Danzig...*, p. 144.

extra money to bring them from abroad because they wanted to be sure of receiving a high-quality work of art. What were the implications of these imports for their founders? Were there only religious reasons involved – the desire to earn divine favour with an exclusive foundation? To answer this question, let us take look at the foundations of the abovementioned St Reinhold Confraternity.

“Bidden barm-
hertigen got
vor...”

This confraternity emerged in the second half of the fifteenth century as a new formation consociating merchants. In their activities, they referenced the chivalric ethos and customs, although in fact they had nothing in common with knighthood. The chapel of the confraternity was located in the Church of Our Lady.⁵⁵ This Gdańsk confraternity persistently strove for an appropriate artistic setting for its chapel. It selected for the execution of its commissions a centre that guaranteed high quality and expressive, attractive artistic formulas, one which was extremely regarded in whole Europe. In 1491 the confraternity commissioned a retable from Amsterdam.⁵⁶ The work has not been preserved; one archival source mentioned that on its way to Gdańsk it was looted by privateers. It eventually resurfaced in Hamburg cathedral as a gift of two local burghers. All endeavours to have it remitted to Gdańsk were to no avail.

The next attempt to purchase a work of art from the Netherlands was successful. In 1516, the high-quality winged retable described above, made in Antwerp (fig. 10), was installed in the confraternity chapel, as indicated in *Chronica des Landes Preussen Anno 1548* by Georg Melmann.⁵⁷ The retable must have been admired, since in the second redaction of his chronicle (1552), Melmann included the Reinhold retable's presence in the chapel immediately after the information about the great retable by Michel of Augsburg, which was placed on the main altar in the same church in the same year.⁵⁸

It seems likely that the lineage of the confraternity members had an impact on their choice of stylistic formula and artist. Many of its members originated from Western Europe, above all Westphalia and North Rhine, but also from the region close to where the retable was executed – the vicinity of Leiden, Amsterdam, Ghent, Dordrecht, Mechelen, and Kampen.⁵⁹ Their extensive knowledge of the products available on the West European art market, and their sophisticated taste, is striking. The extraordinarily high standard of this art foundation

⁵⁵ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, pp. 434–441; Drost, *Die Marienkirche in Danzig...*, pp. 103–104.

⁵⁶ Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 15; Weilandt, *Transferkultur – Danzig...*, p. 79.

⁵⁷ APG, ms. 300/R/LI/1, fol. 734–735, Melmann's passage about St Reinhold's retable is quoted in: Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 23.

⁵⁸ APG, ms. 300/R/LI/2, fol. 496, *Chronica oder Eigentliche Beschreibung dessen was sich merkwürdiges in Pohlen und Preussen absonderlich auch in Danzig begeben und zugetragen, beschrieben von Georg Melmann*. The passage is quoted in: Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 23.

⁵⁹ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, pp. 163–166, 435; Paul Simson, *Der Artushof in Danzig und seine Bruderschaften, die Banken*, Danzig 1900, pp. 38, 42; Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 25.



Fig. 10. Workshops of Jan de Molder and Joos van Cleve, Retable of St Reinhold Confraternity, ca. 1515, Church of Our Lady in Gdańsk, photo: Andrzej Woziński

reflected the elitism of this chivalric confraternity. As such, the work can justifiably be perceived as an element of competition with other social groups.

How much money did Gdańsk art founders spend to achieve the abovementioned goals? Information on the financial aspect of art foundations in Gdańsk is very rare. A contract from 1512 drawn up between a Gdańsk painter, Michael, and representatives of the town of Lębork (Lauenburg) for the execution of a retable in the form of a sculpted, painted and gilded triptych of modest size (“dass Corpus szal syen XI quartir hoch die brethe II ell [?]”) mentions a fee of 70 marks for the painter.⁶⁰ We do not know if the cost of the materials was included in that figure. This amount is equivalent to approximately 24 florins.⁶¹ By comparison,

⁶⁰ APG, 300/D/70, nr 159; Andrzej Woziński, *Wokół kontraktu Mistrza Michała z Augsburga na nastawę oltarzową dla Lęborka z 1512 r.*, “Biuletyn Historyczny” 2004, nr 24, pp. 57–68.

⁶¹ In 1512 one florin was equivalent to approximately 2.9 marks; Oliver Volckart, *Die Münzpolitik im Ordensland und Herzogtum Preußen von 1370 bis 1550* (“Deutsches Historisches Institut Warschau. Quellen und Studien”, Bd. 4), Wiesbaden 1996, p. 441.

the Southern German sculptor Hans Sixt von Staufen was paid 35 fl. for a small monochrome retable (1522–1524) intended for the Locherer Chapel in Freiburg Minster.⁶² It is not easy to compare these expenses, since no trace of the triptych for Lębork has survived.

“Bidden barm-
hertzigem got
vor...”

Compared to the cost of the retable for the high altar in the Church of Our Lady by the same artist, the price of the Lębork retable was very low. The real cost of the Gdańsk work is obscure. Sources mention wildly different sums: 2,886 marks, 3,386 marks, 7,000 marks, and even 13,550 marks and 15 groschen for the whole monumental construction.⁶³ In the period when the Gdańsk retable was under construction, the average florin-to-mark exchange rate was 2:1.⁶⁴ The first two prices would seem to be credible if we compare them to other known large retables from other regions and their costs. The retable by Michael Wolgemut in the Church of Our Lady in Zwickau (1479) cost 1,400 fl., for instance; that by Michael Pacher in St. Wolfgang’s Church in Sankt Wolfgang in Salzkammergut (1471–1481) 1,200 fl.; and the work by Veit Stoss in St Mary’s Church in Kraków (1477–1489) 2,808 fl.⁶⁵ The figure of over 7,000 marks for the Gdańsk work is also possible, given that the most expensive retable on record, unfortunately not preserved, which was made between 1484 and 1498 by Michael Pacher for the Church of Our Lady in Salzburg, cost only slightly less – 3,300/3,500 fl.⁶⁶ Although the highest of the figures found in the sources seems vast, we do not know when the valuation took place and whether it did not include the silver figurines, which, as mentioned, were most likely funded for the retable by several different representatives of the Gdańsk community and at various times. We must take into account the fact that on the obverse of the inner wings there were 40 niches for these statuettes. Bötticher, as was mentioned above, notes that in 1519, five silver figures were purchased for that retable for a sum of around 1,000 marks.⁶⁷ In this context, a huge sum such as the last does not look utterly impossible.⁶⁸ The real total price of the Gdańsk retable is a matter that requires further research. Whatever the actual

⁶² Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, pp. 62–63, tab. 36.

⁶³ The figure of 7,000 marks is given in: *Christoph Beyer...*, p. 459. Bötticher reports that initially the cost was 2,886 marks, which rose to 3,386 marks, and by 1512 had exceeded 7,000 marks; *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, pp. 77–78, 207. The figure of 13,550 marks and 15 groschen was given in: Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 443, note 1, citing a manuscript from the Stadtbibliothek in Gdańsk that is no longer extant.

⁶⁴ Volckart, *Die Münzpolitik im Ordensland...*, p. 441.

⁶⁵ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, p. 62, fig. 36; Peter Strieder, *Zur Struktur der spätgotischen Werkstatt* [in:] *Der Schwabacher Hochaltar. Internationales Kolloquium anlässlich der Restaurierung. Schwabach, 30. Juni–2. Juli 1981* (“Bayerisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege”, Arbeitsheft 11), München 1982, p. 28.

⁶⁶ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, p. 62, fig. 36

⁶⁷ *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, p. 86, 397.

⁶⁸ A similar opinion was also expressed in: Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 443, note 1.

figure, the example of this work testifies to the wealth of the city and the willingness of its residents to contribute large sums to church foundations.

The St Reinhold Confraternity paid 40 Rhenish guilders for its retable, which was commissioned in 1491 in Amsterdam.⁶⁹ This sum was equivalent to 56 marks.⁷⁰ We do not know the price of the second retable commissioned by Gdańsk's St Reinhold Confraternity in Antwerp ca. 1515. Its sculpted parts were made by the well-known workshop of Jan de Molder, and the painted elements by one of the leading Netherlandish painters of the day, Joos van Cleve, and his workshop. Hirsch quoted a lost document referring to this work: "hebbe ik gefen Bernt Tullen, dat he vor de tafel utgefen heft 100 Mk." ("I have paid Bernt Tullen 100 marks for what he spent on the panel").⁷¹ We do not know who Tullen was. Ryszard Szmydki assumed that Tullen was a member of the confraternity, who paid this sum as a donation for the retable,⁷² but that is not certain. Micha Leeflang hypothesizes that Tullen could have been the intermediary between the contractor and confraternity. It is indeed likely that the confraternity sent him to the Antwerp workshop to monitor the progress of its retable.⁷³ The sum of 100 marks may have been an instalment rather than the final price for the whole work. It would seem likely that such a splendid retable, with two pair of wings, produced by leading Antwerp workshops would have been more expensive. Jan de Molder, to whom the sculpted parts of the Gdańsk St Reinhold retable are attributed, was paid 15 Flemish pounds for the retable for the abbey of Averbode in 1513.⁷⁴ This sum – for the sculpted parts only – was the equivalent of 90 Rhenish florins, or 150 marks.⁷⁵ Together with the painted wings, the total price of the Averbode retable must surely have been higher. According to Lynn F. Jacobs, Netherlandish sculpted retables could be obtained for a price of between 9 and 15 Flemish pounds (c. 90–150 marks), but there are also records of more expensive ones, such as that dating from 1509 for the city of Dunkerque, which cost 115 Flemish pounds (c. 1,093 marks) or the ones commissioned by Leuven confraternities and guilds in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for price of between 33 and 50 Flemish pounds (c. 300–450 marks).⁷⁶

⁶⁹ Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 15.

⁷⁰ In 1491 one Rhenish florin was an equivalent of 1,4 Mk.; Volckart, *Die Münzpolitik im Ordensland...*, p. 441.

⁷¹ Hirsch, *Die Oberpfarrkirche von St. Marien...*, p. 435, note 2.

⁷² Szmydki, *Retables anversoises...*, p. 24.

⁷³ Micha Leeflang, *The "Saint Reinhold Altarpiece" by Joos van Cleve and His Workshop: New Insights into the Influence of Albrecht Durer on the Working Process* [in:] *Making & Marketing: Studies of the Painting Process in Fifteenth- and Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Workshops*, ed. Molly Faries, Turnhout 2006, p. 21; *eadem*, *Joos van Cleve: A Sixteenth-Century Antwerp Artist and His Workshop*, Turnhout 2015, p. 112.

⁷⁴ Lynn F. Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces, 1380–1550: Medieval Tastes and Mass Marketing*, Cambridge 1998, pp. 166–167.

⁷⁵ Volckart, *Die Münzpolitik im Ordensland...*, p. 441.

⁷⁶ Jacobs, *Early Netherlandish...*, pp. 177, 255.

We also know the prices for Gdańsk artworks of a different kind. The cost of the Passion group by Master Paul from 1517 on the Holy Rood in the Church of Our Lady, commissioned by Lucas Ketting, was 500 marks, according to August Hinz.⁷⁷ This price seems very high, but we have to consider the enormous size of the figures (cross: 830 × 535 cm, Christ: 450 × 400 cm, St Mary: 350 × 120 × 75 cm, St John the Evangelist: 360 × 120 × 75 cm, beam: 1050 × 62 cm).⁷⁸ One famous sculptor from Ulm, Michael Erhart, was paid 20 fl. (40 marks) and 50 fl. (100 marks) in 1495 for two crucifixes,⁷⁹ but we do not know their sizes. In terms of Gdańsk works, we should mention two sculptures from the Baltic coast region purchased for high prices by the church in Gettorf in Schleswig-Holstein: St George on horseback (1505), for 150 Lübeck marks (180 marks), and another image of the same saint made partly from gold and silver (between 1506 and 1524), for 373 Lübeck marks (466 marks).⁸⁰

“Bidden barm-
hertzigem got
vor...”

The monumental wooden sacrament tower in the same Gdańsk church was founded in 1482 for 132 marks, polychromy included.⁸¹ The sacrament tower in St Lorenzin’s Church, Nürnberg (1493–1495) was much more expensive, at 700 fl., but this sum also covered both the material – stone – which was more expensive than wood, and the salary for Adam Kraft and his three “gesellen” for three years of work.⁸²

To compare these with some other costs, Hans Düringer, the constructor of the astronomical clock, received a fee of 393 marks, as well as a house at Holy Ghost Street and an annual salary of 24 marks for maintenance of the work.⁸³ In 1516, the churchwardens in the Church of Our Lady paid 718 marks for a golden chasuble, cope and antependium, and 79 marks for a banner for the high altar.⁸⁴ In 1523 they paid 576 marks for six books for the cantor and a psalter.⁸⁵ In 1524 a candle holder in the shape of a crown, which was suspended in the choir in front of the high altar, cost 179 marks.⁸⁶

⁷⁷ August Hinz, *Kurze Beschreibung der Ober-Pfarrkirche zu St. Marien in Danzig, mit Angabe der darin enthaltenen Merkwürdigkeiten, als Wegweiser, zunächst für Fremde*, Danzig 1864, p. 21.

⁷⁸ The dimensions are provided in: Archiwum Kościoła Mariackiego w Gdańsku, Ewa Lisiak, *Dokumentacja prac konserwatorskich Grupy Ukrzyżowania (ok. 1517) Mistrza Pawła z belki tęczowej kościoła NMP w Gdańsku*, Gdańsk 2018, typescript, p. 4.

⁷⁹ Anja Broschek, *Michel Erhart. Ein Beitrag zur schwäbischen Plastik der Spätgotik*, Berlin–New York 1973, pp. 207–208; Gerhard Weilandt, *Vorträge mit Künstlern und finanzielle Abwicklung von Aufträgen [in:] Meisterwerke massenhaft...*, p. 311.

⁸⁰ Bonsdorf, *Kunstproduktion und Kunsverbreitung...*, pp. 128–129. The average rate exchange of the Lübeck mark to the Prussian mark was 1:1.25; Henryk Samsonowicz, *Badania nad kapitałem mieszczańskim Gdańska w II połowie XV wieku*, Warszawa 1960, pp. 19, 27.

⁸¹ *Chronik der Marienkirche...*, pp. 45, 207.

⁸² Strieder, *Zur Struktur der spätgotischen...*, p. 28; Karl Kahn, *Archivalisches zu Leben und Werk von Adam Kraft [in:] Adam Kraft*, Hg. Frank Matthias Kammel, Nürnberg 2002, pp. 53–55.

⁸³ *Chronik der Marienkirche*, pp. 28–29, 207.

⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 85, 208, note 21.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 91–92, 208, note 21.

⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

To give an idea of the value of the prices paid in Gdańsk for the above-mentioned artworks, it may be helpful to compare them with some incomes and prices in the city. In fifteenth-century Gdańsk, the annual salary of a city carpenter was 24 marks.⁸⁷ Priests employed in the Church of Our Lady to serve at the side altars in the aisles were paid annually between 10 and 16 marks on average, except those from the Chapel of the Priests Confraternity, whose annual salary was 22 marks; priests employed in the chapels in the transept and round the choir were paid better – their annual salary might be over 20 marks.⁸⁸

As a second point of reference for the prices of works we may take prices of building plots and properties on the main and most prestigious thoroughfares of the commercial metropolis. What follows are some examples of building plot prices from the second half of the fifteenth century: at Długa Street (Langgasse): 112 marks (data from the year 1468), 240 marks (1499), 350 marks (1472), 800 marks (1468); and at Mariacka Street (Frauengasse): 650 marks (1467). Building plots at Długa Street, Ogarna (Hundegasse), and Kaletnicza Street (Beutlergasse) owned by the mayor Johan Ferber were worth 400 marks in 1467, and his land at Szewska Street (Korkenmachergasse) 120 marks.⁸⁹ The tax register (“Einnahme und Verwendung einer Heuser-Schossen”) of 1518 provides a glimpse into real estate prices.⁹⁰ These varied depending on factors including location. The highest prices were for buildings on Długa Street, which ranged between 2,000 and 5,000 marks.⁹¹ These were the homes of the financial and official elites (e.g. Philipp Bischoff – mayor from 1525; Edward Niederhoff – mayor from 1526; Matthias Zimmermann – mayor from 1504; and Reinholt Feltstedte – councillor, merchant and banker). On other streets, property values did not exceed 1,000 marks. There were also much cheaper properties: on Bosmańska Street (Bootsmanngasse), for example, building prices did not exceed 300 marks.⁹² This comparison shows that the most spectacular Gdańsk art foundations were incredibly expensive. For most of the city’s residents, these sums were hard to imagine. However, for extremely rich patricians with fortunes such as those of Otto Angermünde (d. 1496; estate valued at c. 30,000 marks) or Philip Bischoff (d. 1483; estate valued at c. 40,000 marks),⁹³ such vast outgoings made sense and had multiple justifications. In terms of the sums of money spent on religious foundations,

⁸⁷ Maria Bogucka, *Gdańsk jako ośrodek produkcyjny w XIV–XVII wieku*, Warszawa 1962, p. 243, note 19.

⁸⁸ Oliński, *Fundacje mieszczańskie...*, pp. 432–433, detailed data: pp. 400–427.

⁸⁹ Samsonowicz, *Badania nad kapitałem...*, pp. 58–59, 67.

⁹⁰ APG, ms. 300, 12/402. For drawing my attention to this hitherto unused document and the data derived from it, I am sincerely grateful to Dr Marcin Grulkowski.

⁹¹ APG, ms. 300, 12/402, pp. 22–27.

⁹² APG, ms. 300, 12/402, pp. 114–115.

⁹³ Samsonowicz, *Badania nad kapitałem...*, pp. 94–95, 107.

Gdańsk is comparable with other big cities at that time such as Kraków,⁹⁴ Bern,⁹⁵ Strasbourg,⁹⁶ and many places in Southern Germany, where the cost of making a large retable was sometimes several times the annual income of a whole family – often less than 50 fl.⁹⁷

“Bidden barm-
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To conclude, it can be said that late medieval artistic church foundations in Gdańsk show many features common to the whole of Latin Europe. They not only fulfilled religious needs but also had representative functions, including secular ones. The ostentatious splendour of many of them reveals them as a tool in the struggle for prestige. In order to fulfil these functions, they could not be anonymous – on the contrary, the founder was present in the work and indeed recognizable in various ways. As in many other large cities, almost all social groups participated in the foundation of sacral art. Also as elsewhere, the most spectacular foundations, such as retables, or larger complexes of works linked by a common function, such as the furnishings of chapels, were sometimes associated with enormous financial outlay. What seems to be a distinguishing feature of Gdańsk founders is their very diversified tastes and, consequently, their search for satisfying works and artists outside the city, sometimes in regions far away from Gdańsk such as the Netherlands, Lübeck, or Southern Germany. This was largely a consequence of the diverse origins of the local population. The second important specific feature of Gdańsk foundations is the active participation of the founder in giving final shape to the work. Works of art brought from abroad or made in Gdańsk by artists coming from outside were often adapted to some extent to local customs by their founders (e.g. the butchers' guild retable, and the high altar retable by Michel of Augsburg).

Finally, it is worth adding that the tradition of very rich sacral art foundations in late medieval Gdańsk continued into the post-medieval era. The type of works founded changed, as did some groups of founders, but the tradition remained alive, and the aims of the foundations were comparable to those in the previous period: to immortalize their founders, to portray them as pious people and as role models, and to function as a tool of secular rivalry.

⁹⁴ Cf. summary of artwork and real estate prices in Kraków in: Wojciech Walanus, *Późnogotycka rzeźba drewniana w Małopolsce 1490–1540* (“Ars Vetus et Nova”, t. 21), Kraków 2006, pp. 50–52.

⁹⁵ See note 4.

⁹⁶ Ronald Recht, *Nicolas de Leyde et la sculpture à Strasbourg (1460–1525)*, Strasbourg 1987, pp. 86–89.

⁹⁷ Baxandall, *The Limewood Sculptors...*, pp. 62–63, fig. 36; Claudia Lichte, Gerhard Weilandt, *Prachtvoll und wandelbar. Entstehung und Funktion von Flügelretabeln in Mittelalter*, Stuttgart 1994, p. 20.

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“Bidden barmhertzigem got vor...”

Andrzej
Wozniński

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„Bidden barmhertzigem got vor...”. Kilka uwag o fundacjach artystycznych w późnośredniowiecznym Gdańsku i ich kosztach

Na trzech późnogotyckich gdańskich zabytkach sakralnych powtarza się cytowana w tytule niniejszego tekstu formułka: „Bidden barmhertzigem got vor...” („Weź w opiekę miłosierny Boże...”). Za nią następuje imię i nazwisko fundatora dzieła, który zwraca się tymi słowami do Boga. Formułka mówi o celu fundacji, lecz nie wyjaśnia wszystkich motywacji stojących za tego rodzaju przedsięwzięciem.

Rola fundatora w okresie późnego średniowiecza bardzo często wykraczała poza kwestie finansowe. Częstokroć określał on program ikonograficzny dzieła, a niekiedy również formę, poprzez wskazanie jakiegoś wzoru. Zazwyczaj pragnął, aby ufundowane przezeń dzieło zawierało informacje o nim samym w formie inskrypcji, herbu, motywu figuralnego lub portretu. Pełniły one kilka funkcji. Po pierwsze były znakami własnościowymi. Po drugie upamiętniały fundatora, nie tylko w wymiarze historycznym, lecz i eschatologicznym – miały przypominać o potrzebie modlitwy za zmarłego fundatora, aby wybawić jego duszę od wiecznego potępienia. Fundatorem kierowały nie tylko pobudki religijne. Zamówione przezeń dzieło było wyrazem przynależności do wspólnoty i jednocześnie manifestacją partykularnych interesów. Niekiedy wydatek związany z fundacją był jednorazowy, w innych zaś przypadkach rozkładał się w czasie i pociągał za sobą dodatkowe koszty. Tak było w przypadku nastaw ołtarzowych. Aby nastawa

mogła pełnić swoje funkcje, fundator musiał zatrudnić kapłana sprawującego służbę przy ołtarzu, zapewnić mu strój liturgiczny, zakupić stosowne *vasa sacra*, dostarczać wino do posługi, wosk do świec oraz inne wyposażenie. Sakralne fundacje artystyczne były rodzajem inwestycji obliczonych na to, że się zwrócą, zarówno w sensie religijnym, przyczyniając się do zbawienia fundatora, jak i w kilku innych aspektach – prestiżowym, reprezentacyjnym, estetycznym.

*“Bidden barm-
hertzigem got
vor...”*

Niniejszy tekst poddaje analizie powyższe kwestie na przykładzie późnogotyckich fundacji w Gdańsku. Działalność fundacyjną prowadziły nad Motławą niemal wszelkie kręgi społeczne. Fundacją całej wspólnoty było retabulum ołtarza głównego w kościele Mariackim – ogromne koszty pokryły władze miasta, kościół, cechy, bractwa oraz osoby prywatne. Fundatorem zegara astronomicznego w tej samej świątyni była prawdopodobnie rada miejska. Istotną rolę na polu mecenatu artystycznego odegrały bractwa (świeckie i religijne) oraz cechy rzemieślnicze. Fundatorami były rodziny i pojedyncze osoby, wśród nich wysocy urzędnicy miejscy, burmistrzowie i rajcy, a także przedstawiciel niezwykle ważnej w mieście grupy zawodowej – szyper. W wielu dziełach znajdujemy odniesienia do osób, które je zamówiły. Nierzadko są to odniesienia dosłowne – inskrypcje lub portrety (np. retabulum Bartholomeusa Schultego w kościele franciszkanów), a niekiedy fundator objawiał się w swoim dziele w sposób aluzyjny, poprzez dobór tematów (np. retabulum bractwa kapłańskiego w kościele Mariackim) lub motywów (retabulum bractwa uczniów szewskich w kościele Mariackim). Niektóre programy retabulów zawierają dane o pochodzeniu, statusie, aspiracjach lub ważnych wydarzeniach w życiu fundatora (np. tzw. Duży Ołtarz Ferberów w kościele Mariackim). Pozycję fundatora odzwierciedlały też forma i jakość dzieła (np. retabulum bractwa św. Reinholda w kościele Mariackim).

Informacje o kosztach dzieł sztuki w omawianym okresie w Gdańsku są bardzo nieliczne. Artykuł zestawia je z kosztami pokrewnych realizacji na innych terenach, a także z zarobkami niektórych grup zawodowych oraz cenami parcel i nieruchomości w Gdańsku. Zestawienie to pokazuje, że najbardziej spektakularne fundacje artystyczne (np. retabulum ołtarza głównego w kościele Mariackim) pochłaniały niewyobrażalne kwoty. Pod tym względem sytuacja w Gdańsku jest porównywalna z innymi wielkimi ośrodkami, takimi jak Kraków, Berno, Strasburg czy miasta południowoniemieckie.

Późnośredniowieczne kościelne fundacje artystyczne w Gdańsku wykazują wiele cech wspólnych dla całej Europy łacińskiej. To, co wydaje się być rysem szczególnym Gdańska, to bardzo zróżnicowany gust tutejszych fundatorów i w konsekwencji poszukiwanie satysfakcjonujących dzieł i artystów poza miastem, niekiedy w regionach znacznie oddalonych, takich jak Niderlandy, Lubeka czy Niemcy Południowe. Ta cecha była w znacznej mierze pochodną zróżnicowanego pochodzenia miejscowego społeczeństwa. Drugi istotny wyróżnik gdańskich fundacji to aktywny udział fundatora w nadaniu dziełu ostatecznego kształtu. Dzieła sprowadzane z zagranicy czy też tworzone na miejscu przez artystów przybyłych z zewnątrz gdańscy fundatorzy starali się w pewien sposób dostosować do miejscowych potrzeb i przyzwyczajeń (retabulum cechu rzeźników, retabulum ołtarza głównego w kościele Mariackim).