The Sümeg “workshop” of Maulbertsch

The fresco painting in Western Hungary in the middle of 18th Century

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The main topic of my PhD dissertation is the Maulbertsch’s fresco work in Sümeg parish church, primarily the question of the painter’s workshop in a broadly sense and its contemporary reception issues. Since the early years of our century, a lively discussion is taking place around the question of the Maulbertsch’s workshop or workshops.

The discussion runs about the questions: who were the members of the workshop and with how inspirations started or continued their careers. Of course, the workshop question was present in the oeuvre of Maulbertsch research from the beginning. However, recently the question of "Hands Separation" come to the fore, and the recent research results reached also the Sümeg parish church frescoes yet, whose perception changes with immediate context within the oeuvre. Some new attributions have been appeared in the literature, such as Johannes Pöckel, Johann Wenzel Bergl and Andreas Brugger's name.

Although on the presence of Johannes Pocket in Sümeg we have quiet thorough research results, his specific painting orders, tasks are unexplored yet. His name was the alleged to the members of the Maulbertsch’s workshop line just in a purely logical way.

Andreas Brugger is the only one who was a verifiable disciple of Maulbertsch during the time of the preparation of the Sümeg frescoes, but we have any clues for his presence in Sümeg. His name is not known in the Hungarian art history and began his independent career just many years later, enriched new inspirations by the study of his Italian study
journey, returned to his homeland. While his life's work was detailed analyzed in a monograph, his presence in Sümeg we can’t improve, it is almost impossible on the basis of his later works. We have any available relevant source on the presence of Johann Wenzel Bergl in Sümeg, however, his unique style is quite undoubtedly recognizable fresco works, the nature of his participation and mainly the suspicion which raised recently that he had in Sümeg a program making and major role, but it needs further examination yet.

The primarily aim of my PhD dissertation was not the verification of these hypotheses, but rather review of the research lines directed to separate the "hands", the workshop-research from a different approaching, a different method of research, which is supplemented with an examination based on fundamentally the fresco investigation.

I interpreted in my paper the Sümeg workshop with involvement also the person of the principal, Bishop Márton Bíró Padányi as an intellectual creative activity as well. We inherited many of Padányi’s sermons and also the chronograms made for the fresco ensemble of the church, which are exceptional, still not fully exploited possibilities of the Baroque-patronage research.