

Stanisław Mossakowski, *Kaplica Zygmuntowska (1515-1533). Problematyka artystyczna i ideowa Mauzoleum króla Zygmunta I [Sigismund's Chapel (1515-1533). Artistic and Ideological Issues of the Mausoleum of King Sigismund I of Poland]*.

Warsaw: Liber pro Arte, 2007, 372 p.

This work by Professor Stanisław Mossakowski is the result of more than 25 years of research and is the latest and the most complete monograph in the Polish academic literature on the Mausoleum of King Sigismund I of Poland of the Jagiellon dynasty. It is based on indepth studies by the author, extensive literature, and detailed surveys of library source holdings. Sigismund's Chapel, built at the Wawel Cathedral in Cracow and crowned with a cupola, is one of Poland's most outstanding monuments and a unique piece of Polish Renaissance art. It is also one of the most prominent creations in Europe and, as a result, it has become known in literature as the "pearl of the Renaissance north of the Alps". The monument - a work of art by the Italian Bartolomeo Berrecci and his colleagues - has continued to receive the attention of many generations of researchers for the last 100 years. "So as to leave the vicious circle of frequently contradictory general statements and fragmentary studies" as we read in his work the author formulated his task as carrying out a scrupulous analysis of all motifs of architectural and sculpture decorations of the piece of art "by gradual extension of the scope of the research, to attempt to formulate the conclusions referring to the entire building, its creator and his colleagues, the environment in which they developed, and then, the position of the Wawel Chapel in the history of the Polish and European Renaissance architecture and sculpture" (p.13).

The work by Stanisław Mossakowski represents a thorough study of issues such as pre-paring the project (1515-1517), its creation (architecture and interior decorations - 1517-1527, figure sculptures - 1526-1533), architectural orders and the portal, artistic provenance in its broader meaning taking into account elements of antiquity and works of art by artists such as Giuliano da Sangallo, Andrea Sansovino, Benedetto da Rovezzano, Michelangelo and Rafael, the ideological program and its genesis (ordering, critical evaluations, and development of the existing proposals), and the role of the monument in the history of art. Striving for a fuller understanding of the piece of art, the author has applied mainly aesthetic criteria contemporary to the period of the monument's creation.

The publication is enriched by source annexes, a list of 271 pictures (mainly photographs, with fewer drawings, almost all of them black and white) illustrating the chapel, and comparative material covering the pieces of art from antiquity to the period contemporary to the creation of the monument, as well as an extensive index. The work provides excellent material for the study of the history of art in Poland and the basis for the conclusions in preparing the synthesis of the European art of modern times. The author, one of Poland's most outstanding art historians, specializes in issues related to the history of architecture and decorative sculpture, the role of the tradition of antiquity in art, Polish-Italian artistic connections, and relations between the history of art and the history of ideas.

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