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ABOUT

The author and date of the icon are unknown. The icon portrays Saint Mitrofanij in a dark brown monk's habit, with the attributes of a bishop. The image of Saint Mitrofanij creates an ascetic sense of consolation and wholeness. Bishop Mitrofanij was canonised in 1832. The date of this icon could therefore be around the second quarter of the 19th century. The painting of the icon is fine and high professional level. The icon is the property of the All Saints Orthodox Church in Riga located katolju street 10A. There is no official information regarding the history or restoration of the object; however, judging by its technical condition, it appears to have been kept in unsuitable conditions with an unstable microclimate. In former time a central heating radiator was installed beneath the icon; during the heating season this significantly increased the temperature and reduced air humidity, thereby promoting deformation of the wooden panel and cracking of the ground and paint layers.

The icon was in poor technical condition:

- The wooden base has damages by woodworms.
- Due to improper storage conditions, the paint and the ground layer have been lost over the entire area of the figure.



Icon overview before restoration



Icon overview with restoration filling



Icon overview after restoration



Icon's
fragment
Nr. 1.
before
restoration



Icon's
fragment
Nr. 1.
with
restoration
filling



Icon's
fragment
Nr. 1.
after
restoration

- There are many small lifts of the paint layer over the entire surface area.
- The ground layer has poor adhesion to the wood panel.
- The varnish layer is thin and uneven

Over time the icon was put into another old decorative frame, due to its enlarged size the bottom part of the icon was added. During the painting of the lower part of the icon, the original painting was overpainted and repaired, including the background being gilded over. The background gilding was made in a bad quality, as in some areas the gold was applied directly over the original paint layer. Because the gold leaf was laid onto an uneven oil varnish layer, the gold has sunk into it, resulting in shrinkage and surface distortions. The overpaintings have darkened; most of them are visible only due to differences in surface gloss gradation.

During the research, 3 samples of the paint layer with ground layer were taken to determine the pigment and paint binder. It was established that the binding medium is oil; accordingly, both the original part of icon and the later added part. The presence of Prussian blue (discovered in 1724) was identified, which allows the icon to be dated to the second quarter or the latter half of the 19th century. The examined samples also revealed the presence of lead white as an admixture. The red sample was found to contain red ochre, with a possible addition of cinnabar. The main tasks were to conserve the icon, stopping its

further degradation and restoring the visual appearance, which is hampered by the damage that has developed over time.

RESTORATION PROCESS

The work included removing the layer of dirt, consolidating the ground and paint layers, strengthening and impregnating wood panel, thinning the varnish layer, inpainting and retouching, and applying a new layer of varnish. Certain restoration processes, such as consolidation of the paint layer and thinning of the varnish layer, had to be carried out using microscope. The paint layer was consolidated using Aquazol 200® at an 8% concentration in distilled water. The deteriorated areas of the wooden panel were impregnated with a 6% solution of PLEXISOL P-550-40® in petroleum spirit "C2". The adhesive was injected into insect exit holes using a syringe until the wood was fully saturated. In areas of loss, a restoration filling was applied with a brush and scalpel. The restoration ground consisted of levigated chalk bound with 6% Aquazol 200®. After drying, the restoration filling was trimmed with a scalpel and smoothed with P1200–1500 grit sandpaper. For varnish thinning, a solvent mixture of isopropyl alcohol and turpentine in a 1:3 ratio was selected. As a varnish layer, Regalrez® 1094 (10% diluted in petroleum spirit) was applied in order to enhance colour depth, facilitate the toning process,

protect the icon from further degradation, and even out surface gloss.

Large areas of loss were toned using gouache paints (SCHMINCKE HORADAM® Künstlerfarben). Prior to toning, the surface of the restoration ground was isolated with a 2% Aquazol 200® solution. During the restoration, it was decided not to reconstruct the gilding, as the primary task was the conservation and restoration of the icon.



Icon's overview before
restoration



Icon's back overview after
cleaning