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NEW RENAISSANCE
IN EUROPE

Renaissance Route in Malopolska

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VILLA
DECIUS

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The Itinerary Renaissance Route in Malopolska shows the historical and cultural aspects of European Renaissance in Poland. The Renaissance's influenced the transformation of Krakow, which in this period was the Capital of Poland, and the center therefore developed in terms of architecture, commerce, craft, culture and science. The itinerary in Malopolska presents in this entirely new context and demonstrates the potential of the city and its role in the development of European regions.

To present the material and immaterial heritage of the Renaissance, the itinerary is based on the life and activity of Justus Decius, an extremely interesting but nowadays less well-known person.

Kraków - metropolis

Poland has been a tolerant country and especially so was the metropolis of Kraków. When, in 1508, Jost Ludwig Dietz, the Alsatian, born in Weissenburg (Germany) came to Kraków from Hungary, he soon became one of the most influential persons in the city. His name, following the custom of Kraków's humanists, was latinised to Justus Ludovicus Decius - as this is how the Alsatian started to be called. He was a protégé of his compatriot, Jan Boner, a royal banker, the founder and manager of the largest commercial empire in contemporary Europe – the Wieliczka and Bochnia salt mines. Through his positions as secretary, book-keeper and trusted deputy, Decius quickly became a consummate diplomat, practised financier and a highly positioned royal dignitary who rendered great services to the city in his capacity as secretary of King Sigismund the Old (since 1520). Decius was a royal advisor, deputy and diplomat, the principal of crown mints, historiographer, editor. Due to his many talents, literary and historical dissertations, many journeys and scientific predilections, he enjoyed the respect and friendship of the most outstanding European humanists.

He knew and corresponded with Martin Luther and Desiderius Erasmus. He also maintained close contacts with the Habsburg court. Already by 1519 he had obtained noble status from the emperor.

Superintendent of the royal Prussian mints after 1525, Decius was involved together with Copernicus by King Sigismund the Old in the preparation of the monetary reform in Poland. Thanks to practical solutions, more favorable to the Treasury of the state he won the polemics with Copernicus and has become the author of the reform adopted by the Parliament. He began this activity by writing a treaty entitled *De monetae cusionis ratione* (On the Proper Striking of Coins), in which he presented a program to improve the mint system. This work contained a proposal on how to remove foreign and counterfeit coins from circulation and introduce a unified system of payment in the entire state. The text was approved by the Parliament in 1526 and became the basis for an ordinance issued by the King. It was on the principles Decius elucidated that Cracow mint was founded, in which three types of coins were struck: denarius, crowns and pennies. In addition, he contributed to the conclusion of the monetary union between Poland and Prussia. Decius was one of the first Polish authors, along with Nicholas Copernicus, to write economic treatises which marked the beginning of Polish economic literature.

The royal court

Thanks to the marriage of King Sigismund to Bona Sforza of Italy, together with the court of the future queen, European culture, Italian artists and architects reached Poland, bringing with them new urban thought expressed by houses, squares, churches, and palaces, together with the culture and atmosphere of the South as well as the quality of life and new perception of the world. By the royal court a new lifestyle based on humanism penetrated the popular consciousness. Sigismund's Chapel of the Wawel Cathedral is one of the most notable pieces of Florentine architecture outside Italy. Built as a funerary chapel, it has been hailed by many art historians as the most beautiful example of the Tuscan Renaissance north of the Alps. Financed by King Sigismund I the Old, it was built in the years 1519-1533 by Florentine master builder Bartolomeo Berrecci. A square-based chapel with a golden dome houses the tombs of its founder King Sigismund, as well as King Sigismund II Augustus and Anna Jagiellonka. The inner sculptures, stuccos and paintings were designed by the most renowned artists of the age, including the architect Berrecci, Georg Pencz, Santi Gucci or Vischer family of Nuremberg. Sigismund's Chapel became a model for other buildings constructed in the following years in Poland.



Art and Literature

The material and immaterial heritage of Renaissance illustrate the work of Callimachus, Filippo Buonaccorsi (founder of the centre of exchange of ideas *Sodalitas Litteraria Vistulana*) and Italian architects: Francesco Fiorentino (the first Italian Renaissance artist working in Poland, eg. renaissance part of the Wawel royal castle, tombstone of John Olbracht in the Wawel Cathedral), Bartolomeo Berrecci (eg. Sigismund's Chapel), Santi Gucci Fiorentino (eg. castle in Baranov, Mirow Castle in Ksiaz Wielki, residence Branickich, nobility residences in Kraków centre) and Bona Sforza – (eg. influence on language, music, fashion and cuisine).

The dialogue of ideas and cultures taking place in Renaissance period in Poland involved the following humanists: Stanislaus of Skalbmierz, first formally described concept of just wars (*De bellis iustis*, 1411); Paulus Vladimiri, first concept of tolerance (*Tractatus de potestate papae et imperatoris respectu infidelium*, 1414-1418), Nicolaus Copernicus, founder of the heliocentric system; Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski, first concept of equality of citizens' rights (*De Republica Emendanda*, 1543).

Villa Decius

In 1528 Justus Decius purchased parts of Przegorzały and Wola Chełmska villages near Kraków in order to build a suburban villa following the example of a fashionable *paradis terrestre* in the environs of Florence and Rome – estates that were meeting places and places of rest and philosophical debate. He employed three Italian builders for designing and construction of his residence: Giovanni Cini of Siena, Zenobius Gianotti of Rome and Filippo of Fiesole. They were helpers of Bartolomeo Berecci and worked on the construction of the Sigismund's Chapel in the Cathedral.

The renaissance residence of Decius was located on the picturesque slope of the hill, with the façade facing a view of Krakow, surrounded by an extensive renaissance garden and a park. The adjacent forested hills rounded out the composition of the complex.

The villa was completed in 1535. Soon it became the venue for meetings of representatives of different cultures and nationalities, the exchange of opinion and for creative confrontation between various convictions. After the death of the patron of the house, in 1545, the estate was inherited by his son, Justus junior, known as the leading representative of Calvinism in the capital of the Republic of Poland. Now Villa Decius, situated in the Wola Justowska district, belongs to one of the most distinctive and remarkable examples of residential architecture in Poland.



Renaissance Route in Malopolska

Network of renaissance buildings in Maloposka Region.

The proposed route shows the spread of the new style in architecture and through it, the dominant influence of a strong center to peripheral areas of the kingdom. The rout includes: Wawel Royal Castle / The cathedral - Sigismund Chapel, the Dominican Church – located in the center and the objects on the periphery: the Villa Decius Palace and Park Complex, Miechów – Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre, Książ Wielki – Castle upon Mirów in Książ Wielki, Sucha Beskidzka – Castle in Sucha Beskidzka - Branickich residence (the granary)

Network of renaissance buildings in Maloposka Region

The wide network of renaissance buildings in Maloposka Region consists of 18 places managed by different institutions, like museums, educational institutions, churches and cultural institutions. That are the following museums: Wawel Castle, Castle Pieskowa Skała, Castle in Szymbark, the granary in Branice (Archaeological Museum in Cracow), Castle in Sucha Beskidzka, City Hall in Tarnów (Regional Museum in Tarnów), Royal Castle in Niepołomice; educational institutions: Manor in Jeźów (Art School Complex in Tarnow), Mirow Castle in Ksiaz Wielki (Public School Complex); cultural institutions: Villa Decius (The Villa Decius Association); church institutions: Sigismund's Chapel, Cistercian Abbey of Krakow (the frescoes of Stanisław Samostrzelnik), Chapel of the Holy Sepulchre in the monastery in Miechów, Chapel of Branicki family in Niepołomice, the Cathedral in Tarnów (team tombstones) and movable monuments and paintings found in the churches in: Zielonki (renaissance tabernacle wall), Giebułtów (the frescoes), Modlnica (a late 16^h -century marble tabernacle in the shape of a round church: a gift to the parish from Krakow Cathedral).

Wawel Castle

The Gothic Wawel Castle in Kraków in Poland was built at the behest of Kazimierz Wielki, who reigned from 1333 to 1370, and consists of a number of structures situated around the central courtyard. The Wawel Royal Castle and the Wawel Hill constitute the most historically and culturally important site in Poland. For centuries the residence of the kings of Poland and the symbol of Polish statehood, the Castle is now one of the country's premier art museums. Interior furnishings were created by the most outstanding artist of their times – Veit Stoss, Bartolomeo Berecci, Giovanni Maria Padovano, Santi Gucci, Jan Michałowicz of Urzędów, Giovanni Trevano, Francesco Placidi and Bertel Thorvaldsen. The Cathedral is surrounded by nineteen chapels. Each of them is a separate church in itself. The Sigismund (Zygmuntowska) Chapel is considered to be the finest example of renaissance architecture north of the Alps.

Castle in Sucha Beskidzka



In 1554, Stanisław Slupski sold the village to an Italian-born goldsmith from Kraków, Gaspare Castiglione, who changed his name to Kasper Suski. Castiglione initiated the construction of the Sucha Castle (1554-1580). The palace was built of building stone found locally and brick. Its three wings surround a rectangular courtyard. Two of them open on to the courtyard through a two-storey arched loggia, characteristic for Renaissance residences.

Now in the Castle Sucha Beskidzka (called *little Wawel*) is a museum that can be visited together with the castle gardens.

*The church of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin
Mary in Sucha Beskidzka*



Church buildings with the Renaissance part of the former monastery of canons regular.

Mirow Castle in Ksiaz Wielki

The castle was erected in the years 1585-1595 by Krakow's bishop Piotr Myszkowski and his nephew, also Piotr, according to the project of the Italian architect and sculptor – Santi Gucci, the court artist of King Sigismund II Augustus. The castle was built in the late Renaissance style; late Baroque and Neo-Gothic elements were added in subsequent years. The castle is situated on the hill called Mirów, from behind (from the west side), there is a garden on a slope, where the original structure dating back to the 16th century has been preserved with garden grounds and terraces. A variety of Renaissance features have been preserved there, i.e. canopies, portals and window frames, and from the original defensive system – one curtain along with shooting ranges and the ruins of a bastion. Currently in the building of Mirów Castle houses the public school complex.



Basilica of the Holy Sepulchre

The Polish counterpart of Jerusalem, a specific link with the historical pilgrimage destination the Holy City from the whole ancient Europe. The church and the monastery together with the adjoining buildings constitute the historical complex of international recognition, combining in itself the elements of Romanesque, Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque art. Inside the Basilica there is the Tomb of Christ, which has always been an integral element of all the churches erected by the Order of the Holy Sepulchre (Bożogrobcy). After 1530 year the monastery in Miechów was completely rebuilt. At this time there were created the Gothic-Renaissance cloisters and the central, domed chapel of the Holy Sepulchre modeled on the contemporary Wawel chapel of



Bishop Piotr Tomicki. Inside the chapel retains a symbolic grave of God, and the dome was discovered the wonderful scenery of panels with rosettes. Concerning conservation achievements, the discovery of these paintings during conservation work conducted in 2008 became the revelation of the season.

Modlnica – Church of St. Adalbert and Our Lady of Sorrows



The Church in Modlnica dates from 1553. Originally the church was built in a cross shape, but already in 1622 the north wing was replaced by a renaissance brick chapel and tomb for the Kucharski family, and the wooden sacristy was replaced with a brick one. It is worth paying attention to the gothic portals capped with ogee arches. Inside the church there is impressive renaissance polychrome decoration from 1562 while the chapel has ornamental and figurative polychrome dating from the middle of the C17th. The church fittings include C17th altars with the main altar including a gothic painting of Madonna with Child.

Giebułtów – Church of St. Idzi



The Church of St. Idzi in Giebułtów is one of the oldest roman catholic churches in the area, dates from 1082. First wooden church was rebuilt in the years 1600 – 1604. In 1616 was painted the polychrome decoration. The present building has a late-Renaissance character. The wooden table of the main altar dates from the second half of the 17th century.

Branickich residence (the granary)

A construction of defensive qualities which was the main residence representative of the Branicki family. The building comes from the beginning of the sixteenth century and served as a military and residential tower. The present shape was obtained around 1603, when the modernization of the family seat was made by the famous workshop Santi Gucci. The building was erected on a rectangle (12 x 10 m). On the ground floor there is a hallway with stairs to the first floor and a large room covered with a barrel vault with lunettes. The roof structure is referred to as deep or platform (i.e. one in which the outer parts are situated higher than the central portion) and it is protected by a parapet with arcades and battlements. The elevation shows, a typical of the Renaissance sgraffito rustication that imitates natural stone wall. Chisel craft masters gathered around Santi Gucci reveals late Renaissance decor of the room on the first floor especially the carved limestone fireplace of 1603.



The Sanctuary of The Holy Cross of The Cistercian Abbey in Mogiła

In the Cistercian Abbey in Mogiła are preserved polychromies from renaissance. The chancel, the transept and the chapels next to the sacristy remained in the original style. The main parts of the church owe their polychromy to a Cistercian monk, Stanisław Samostrzelnik. He painted the scenes from the Annunciation in the chancel and the ones showing the Crucifixion in the cloister and above the vestry. He also decorated the ceiling of the library.

