



WORK ON RENOVATION OF THE KUKS HOSPITAL NATIONAL CULTURAL MONUMENT

NKP KUKS, 544 43 KUKS

INVESTOR: NATIONAL HERITAGE INSTITUTE

CONTRACTOR: THE HOCHTIEF – GEMA ART
GROUP ASSOCIATION

IMPLEMENTATION: 2013 – 2015



The long anticipated renovation of the unique baroque monument at Kuks in the Trutnov area got fully underway during June of 2013. The extensive baroque buildings were constructed between 1692 and 1724 at the instigation of František Antonín Špork. At that time, they consisted of a spacious spa centre intended for recreation and common use by the higher aristocracy. In addition to the spa buildings and castle, a horse racing track and castle theatre were located on the left-hand bank of the Elbe River. The Count arranged for a hospital for veterans of the war, together with the Church of the Holy Trinity, to be built opposite the spa on the other side of the Elbe River. The baroque statues of Twelve Virtues and Twelve Vices created by the sculptor Matyáš Bernard Braun are located on the terrace in front of the hospital to remind visitors of the conflict between good and evil.

Over the years, the spa premises and the castle were damaged by floods, fire and wars. The castle ruins were finally torn down in 1901. Of the pompous set of buildings, only the hospital and church have been preserved to the present day, together with the U Zlatého slunce inn and the cascade flight of steps. The hospital had been owned for many years by the Order of the Merciful Brothers.

A comprehensive renovation was carried out in the context of the Kuks – Pomegranate Project. The project aimed to completely renovate the hospital buildings. The spaces are used as teaching rooms, lecture halls, the library of the Kuks Convent of the Merciful Brothers and as a research centre for investigation of the history of Kuks and other estates belonging to F. A. Špork. The adjacent garden was renovated as well, so that medicinal herbs could again be grown there just like under the Order of the Merciful Brothers. The opening ceremony for the public was held in March 2015.



Condition prior to restoration



Course of the works



Condition after restoration



Entry gate after restoration



Entry gate prior to restoration



Course of the works



The original appearance of the garden near the hospital – herb beds



Courtyard – condition prior to restoration



Courtyard – condition shortly before completion of works



Courtyard – condition prior to restoration



Courtyard – condition shortly after completion of works



Façade and courtyard prior to restoration



Condition after restoration



Chapel of the Holy Trinity



Course of the façade renovation



Former restaurant – course of the renovation



Overall view of the Kuks hospital after renovation



Wall painting from the Dance of Death cycle – condition after restoration



Wall painting from the Dance of Death cycle – The Rich Man – condition after restoration



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RESTORATION OF THE DANCE OF DEATH WALL PAINTING:

Restoration of the wall paintings within the hospital's premises involved preservation of the valuable cycle of paintings titled the Dance of Death situated in a 140-metre long corridor on the ground floor, the religious scenes on the northern side of the chapel, a wall painting depicting Jesus Christ as an apothecary, and the remnants of wall paintings at the stair landing.

The most complicated were the preservation works on the Dance of Death, which comprises 52 scenes originating in the 18th century. Eight experts participated in the restoration works, including restorers and Academy painters. During the 19th century, the painting was overlaid with lime plaster. The unique monument was re-discovered in the 1980s during restoration surveys. Four scenes were uncovered at the time, the remaining scenes were uncovered only as part of the Kuks – Pomegranate Project.

The cycle of paintings was damaged in several places by later construction modifications (a newly built partition damaged The Merchant and The King paintings) and the installation of electrical fittings in places showing the accompanying painted verses. Prior to their covering with lime plaster, the surface of some of the paintings was partially scraped off. The most significant damage was made to the paintings of The Countess, The Sailors and The Blind Man.

The restorers removed the lime plaster layers using scalpels and special restoration mallets. Simultaneously, acrylate dispersion was used for local stabilisation of the uncovered paint. Subsequently, organosilicon compounds were introduced to achieve overall strengthening of the painting. The surface was treated with fungicides. The cracks were filled and stuccoed over to correspond to the structure of the surrounding areas. Hairline cracks were grouted with marble dust and lime. The retouch itself was carried out very conservatively so as not to increase the saturation of the colours. The drawing itself was not restored with the exception of some of the most damaged scenes where the shapes were outlined to improve the clarity of the picture.



Painting titled The Fall of Adam and Eve – course of the works



Survey probes prior to the uncovering of the painting



Damage to the painting resulting from installation of electrical fittings



Restorers uncovering historical paintings



The Count painting – course of the restoration



The Count painting – condition after restoration



The Cartman painting – condition after restoration



The Astronomer painting - condition after restoration



The Shopkeeper painting - condition after restoration



The Old Man painting - condition after restoration



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RESTORATION OF THE WALL PAINTINGS IN THE AT THE POMEGRANATE
APOTHECARY SHOP, ON THE CHAPEL'S NORTHERN WALL:

The historical apothecary of the Order of the Merciful Brothers contains an unusual depiction of Jesus Christ as an apothecary. The painting suffered damage during a number of paint-overs and due to the use of unsuitable grouts – in some places, the top layer was completely disintegrated. Unsuitable layers of paint from the 20th century were removed with mallets and scalpels. Organosilicon agents needed to be injected extensively along the whole layer of painting; subsequently, the little holes resulting from the injection were grouted over. Larger defects were grouted with lime stucco. Only one larger crack needed to be sealed with acrylic binders. The restoration of the valuable painting was concluded with an optical consolidation.

The chapel includes paintings from the second half of the 18th century depicting individual biblical scenes defined by illusive frames. The central scene depicts Jerusalem and its surroundings. The painting was painted-over multiple times in the past and cleaning and elimination of unsuitable layers was thus necessary. The plasters had to be continuously strengthened with organosilicon compounds and the defects grouted with lime stucco. Retouching was made with aquarelle colours.



Northern wall of the chapel – condition after restoration of the painting



Ceiling painting in the At the Pomegranate apothecary – course of the works



Ceiling painting in the apothecary – condition after injection



The restored painting



Close-up of the painting after restoration



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RESTORATION OF THE SUNDIAL

The sundial was originally located on the southern side of the exterior facade. The first restoration works were performed already in 1886 and then again in 1957; these, however, were not done properly and did not take account of astronomical calculations. This meant the sundial lost its original functionality.

Restoration and new renovation within the Kuks – Pomegranate project was performed by an Academy painter working together with a sundial expert.



The façade – condition after restoration



Close-up of the newly restored sundial



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RESTORATION OF METAL ELEMENTS

The works involved restoration of baroque window bars and the metal gate in the crypt. The historical ironwork experienced a number of modifications over time – modern welds and makeovers were noticeable, but not seriously damaging.

The bars were cleaned of discontinuous coating, the damaged areas were repaired and the missing parts replaced. The surface was coated with a black zinc-phosphate coating so that in the end the surface attained a graphite-black colour. The original tinning on the gate lock was not restored due to its high porousness and corrosion. The final look of the bars and the metal gate was determined on the basis of the results of the survey of the original colouring.



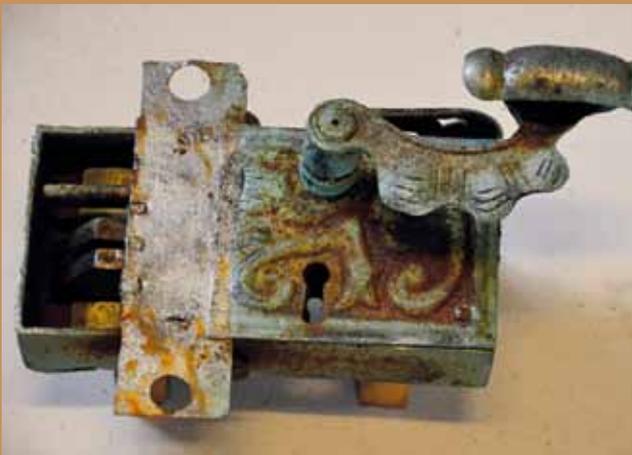
Ironwork gate – condition after restoration



Ironwork gate at the entry to the crypt – condition after restoration



Close-up of the chateâu – condition before renovation



Locking mechanism – after dismantling



Close-up of the decorative ironwork – condition before restoration



Close-up of the decorative ironwork – condition after restoration



Newly restored metal bars – mounting



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RESTORATION OF WOODEN ELEMENTS

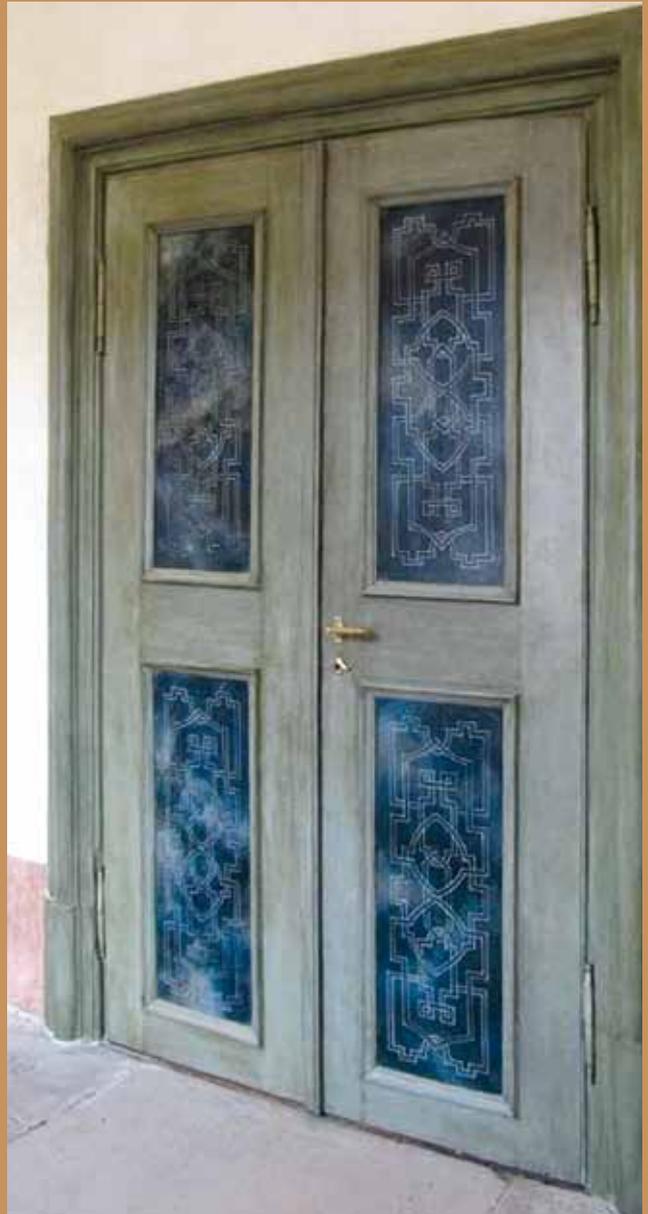
Works carried out in 2014–2015 included restoration of the entrance door to the refectory, the original cabinet in the refectory, polychrome railing, oak windows and a number of other doors. Before the start of the restoration work, a restoration survey had to be performed in order to determine the optimal course of the work.

The door was made of soft wood and oak. The wooden elements were dismantled and restored in a workshop. The door was showing mechanical damage, especially along the casing. The surface was covered with layers of varnish and dried oils. Old and unsuitable surface treatments were removed, the damaged parts were repaired, the wood was re-stained, varnished and a shellac layer was put on. Based on the results of colour stratigraphy, the surface received a new top layer in the original 18th/19th-century colouring.

The oak window frames were damaged by years of use; some casements were broken or completely missing. Unsuitable surface coating was removed. Afterwards, the missing parts were replaced and sealants and surface treatment were administered. The wood was pre-emptively treated against wood-attacking fungi and insects. The restoration works concluded with a complete retouch.



Historical door – condition after restoration



Door after restoration



Close-up of the decorative elements – condition before restoration



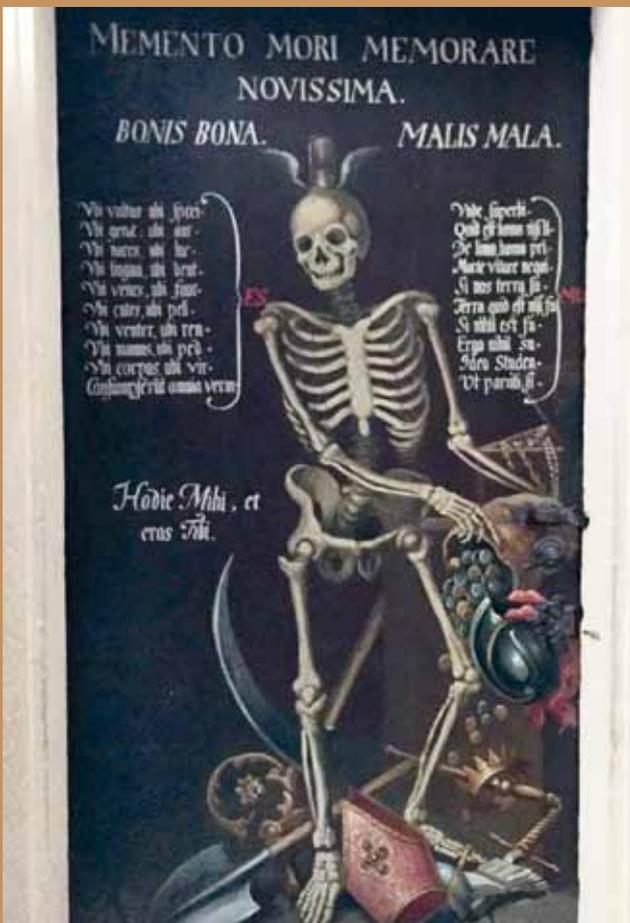
Condition before completion of the works



Condition before restoration



Condition after restoration



Painted door of the hospital - condition after restoration



Historical door - condition after restoration



Niche with historical wooden window



Hospital hallway



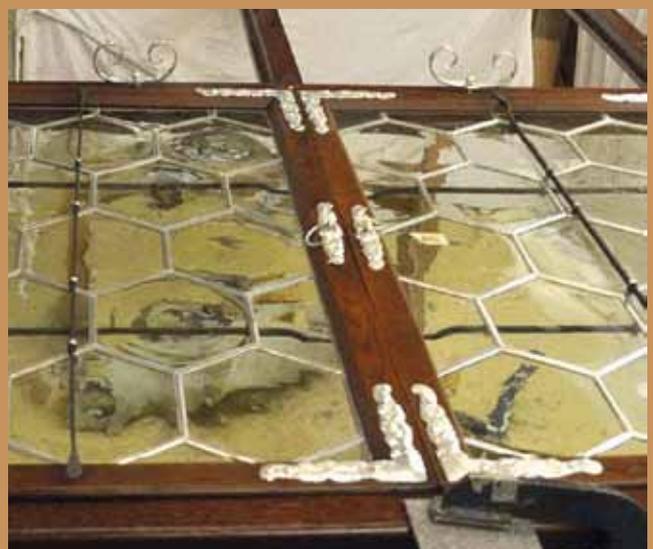
Polychrome railing in the chapel – condition after restoration



Polychrome railing in the chapel – course of the works



Condition after restoration



Close-up of the historical windows after restoration