

The project aims to delineate women's activities related to works of art, which resisted the changes brought about by rational, liberal and intellectual European modernity. It addresses the importance of all hybrid, 'indigenous', marginalized constructs of women's spirituality and piety performed in contact with art and its manifestations, in creating bonds based on harmony, happiness and respect for the world and a sense of happiness. The subject of observation, intensive research and in-depth analysis will become a small group of selected contemporary female monastic communities in Lesser Poland (Małopolska) and Lower Silesia (Dolny Śląsk), i.e. currently functioning convents at Lesser Poland: Benedictines (Staniątki), Albertines, Bernardines, Dominicans, Poor Clares, Ursulines (Kraków), as well as nunneries at Lower Silesia: Borromeans at Trzebnica, Poor Clares of Perpetual Adoration at Ząbkowice Śląskie, and Ursulines at Wrocław.

The project assumes that while contemporary art recovers and reforms certain values lost or marginalized due to the progress of modernity, the art of nuns has preserved as residues similar practices, mostly originating in the Middle Ages. For the first time in Polish science, we are planning to "read" art anew in spaces in which it is not subject only to scientific and historical logic, in order to notice the omitted in previous analyses personal relations with specific objects-artifacts, as well as to show the establishment of community relations through art between the members of the monastic community and people from outside the convent, as well as with the broadly defined animate (plants, animals) and inanimate world. This will allow us to look at art as part of creating a good world in which ethical and aesthetic values complement each other. It is the people who use art, and not the classified artworks, who become the source of knowledge about art in the project.

The research team, consisting of art historians, an artist-drawer, and (temporarily) a cultural anthropologist, will visit all of the selected monasteries and interview the nuns. It is crucial in this process to establish a friendly and respectful understanding with them. Only in this way will the team be able to accompany them in their daily life and devotional practices, peek into their private spaces, and stay in common places. Only by briefly sharing daily life with the nuns will the team be able to fully perceive and understand the relationships and customs of the community, the factors and artifacts that integrate or disintegrate their community, the significance of all their productive activities, and the way in which works of art, artifacts, and much less obvious objects are entangled in the devotional practices and social life of the convent.

Since the aim of the project is to learn a different use of art in nunneries than is the case after university and museum education, we assume that some classical methods of art history should be abandoned. These include photography. Therefore, an important element supporting our analysis will be drawing documentation - made by an artist who is active in the field of contemporary art. We consider drawing to be the most ethical way of documenting the nuns' intimacy, which will also serve as a supplement to the publication resulting from the project.

The project will result in the production of new knowledge and the development of procedures for its acquisition within the discipline of art history, complementing the methods used so far, which have been focused on the "musealisation" and often devoid of the original context of works of art.