

The project focuses on an Early Modern phenomenon situated at the intersection of religiosity, art, and collecting practices: **the emergence and functioning of altarpieces with glazed elements, designed to enhance the visual display of relic collections.** The research will examine a group of altarpieces created in the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth from the conclusion of the Council of Trent (1563) until the Third Partition (1795). **One of the project’s central hypotheses is that these elaborate structures—often filled with dozens of relics and reliquaries—not only manifested the piety of their patrons but also served as ordered collections, comparable in structure to the *Schatzkammer* and *Kunstammer* of the Early Modern period. Exploring the relationship between these sacred displays and secular collecting practices is one of the project’s main objectives, with altarpieces from the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth serving as a key case in point.**

To date, Early Modern collecting has been studied primarily in the context of artworks, antiquities, and naturalia. Although relics were integral components of both ecclesiastical and secular treasuries, they have remained marginal in such analyses. This project fills that gap by examining how post-Tridentine piety and Early Modern collecting ambitions converged in the form of altarpieces conceived as “sacred showcases.”

The study considers their architectural forms, including the degree of glazing, iconographic programs, and their relationship to the liturgical space. The analysis will include:

- typology of the structures,
- iconography,
- use of glassmaking technologies,
- foundation context—private (both secular and ecclesiastical), monastic, and municipal.

Key representative examples of multi-reliquary altarpieces will allow for the reconstruction of practices of relic acquisition, patrons’ motivations, and the role of artists and workshops. An important aspect of the project is its international scope: comparisons with examples from Italy, southern Germany, Silesia, Austria, and the Czech lands will help trace the transfer of artistic forms, religious ideas, and technologies, particularly those related to glass production.

The project applies a methodological framework that draws from art history, history, cultural anthropology, and mobility studies (mobility of people, objects, and ideas). A crucial component will be the analysis of archival sources—including wills, chronicles, visitation records, and ego-documents—providing insight into patronal intentions and the mechanisms behind building such collections.

The altarpieces under study remain in the interiors of active churches and often provoke curiosity and questions from contemporary viewers. For this reason, the project’s outcomes will include not only scholarly articles and conference presentations that bring new findings on the presentation of relic collections in altarpieces and their connection to secular collecting in both Polish and international research contexts. It will also result in popular science publications in regional and national periodicals.

**In conclusion, the project offers a new perspective on sacred art and the history of collecting by investigating the emergence and function of multi-reliquary altarpieces in Early Modern Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth as a conscious and ordered mode of devotional object collecting.** By examining these objects—positioned at the crossroads of religiosity, artistic practice, and collecting ideology—it aims to enhance our understanding of the mechanisms of presenting the sacred in the Early Modern period and to situate Polish examples within the broader framework of European art and cultural history.