

THE STORY OF A WALL PAINTING

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Aruküla manor is one of the most distinguished buildings of classicist architecture in Estonia. It is a great pleasure that a project application for Norwegian funding by this manor school was successful. The restoration of this dignified architectural building as a whole was a great challenge and set high requirements for the restorers. In addition to the research that was the basis for the previous design, additional research was carried out during the construction works. Surprises did not remain hidden, and today we can state that a luxurious interior design was finally revealed. In 2014, two wall paintings specific to early Classicism were discovered under a thick mortar layer. The restoration process of the paintings in the window niches proved to be rather complicated, because the condition of these two paintings was completely different. One painting was very well preserved, but the second one was almost completely deteriorated. The main challenge was to determine whether it was possible to restore two adjacent paintings as a harmonious whole. With the help of a single preserved paint fragment it was possible to distinguish some figures and finally achieve the aim. The restoration works were finished in August 2015. As a result of extensive restoration, the dignified building has regained its splendour and today significantly enriches the landscape of cultural heritage in Estonia.

KEYWORDS: manor schools project, architectural paint research, historical room decorations, rare paintings, conservation process.

In 2014 extensive restoration works began in Aruküla, Hiiu-Suuremõisa and Vääna manor schools in Estonia as part of the manor schools project implemented with the support of Norwegian funds.

Aruküla manor was one of the manor schools whose project application was successful. Aruküla manor was founded in the first half of the seventeenth century. The manor is situated in Järva County in the territory of Estonia [ill. 1].

The construction of the main building of Aruküla manor began after 1770 when it was owned by the

well-known von Knorring family. The family had three other manors in this area – Ervita, Norra and Udeva. At the end of the eighteenth century there was a fire in the main building of Aruküla manor. After the fire the roof was restored; however, only one wing of the building remained usable.¹ It was not until 1820, when General Karl von Toll became the owner of the manor,

¹ Juhan Maiste, 'Manorial Architecture in Estonia' (*Th.v. Bernhardt, Jugenderin-nerungen*, Leipzig, 1893), Kirjastus 'Kunst', 1996, p. 282.



1. Aruküla manor house, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2015
Arukiulos dvaro rūmai
2. Aruküla manor in 1910, photo by M. Öömann,
J. Vali's private collection, 1910
Arukiulos dvaro rūmai 1910 m.

that extensive repair works began.² During the reconstructions, the building received a beautiful classicist appearance with magnificent stucco décor [ill. 2].

The manor received its final finishing in the beginning of the twentieth century, probably around 1908.

² K.W. von Toll participated in the Battle of Austerlitz in 1804. The Patriotic War of 1812 brought him together with Barclay de Tolly, Mikhail Kutuzov, and Emperor Alexander I. He was one of the prototypes in the famous *War and Peace*, a novel by Lev Tolstoy.

Th. von Bernhard, *Denkwürdigkeiten aus dem Leben des kaiserl. Russ. Generals von der Infanterie C. F. G. von Toll*, Leipzig, 1856.

A new external and internal plaster coating and cornices go back to that time.

It was believed that not much of the interior decorations from the golden days of the manor had survived. However, during the construction works, when further research was conducted, it was unexpectedly discovered that there was a finishing from these days under a posterior layer of plaster and, moreover, spectacular painted compositions had been preserved under a thick layer of plaster in three rooms! [ill. 3]

The paintings were demounted from plaster by the restorers *H&M Restuudio OÜ* in 2015. Although

these were mere fragments with holes, the preserved pieces confirm that originally they were high-quality paintings.³

These paintings were compositions that highlighted the magnificence of the rooms and emphasised the doorways and the windows. Based on the fragments found in two rooms, it is possible to presume that there may have been imposing pillars around the windows and doors that culminated in figurative paintings above the doors. The fragmentarily preserved paintings in both rooms were inspired by the legacy of classical antiquity – it seems that one painting depicts a figure in Etruscan red and black colours holding an amphora-type container (vessel) [ill. 4]. Another painting shows a boy with wings and a spear similar to Cupid.

The research on Kiltsi manor carried out several years ago may be helpful in determining the date of the paintings. Similarly to Aruküla, the interior decorations in Kiltsi manor include motifs inspired by classical antiquity. Similar Etruscan black and white figures may already belong to the period of reconstruction works carried out in the last decade of the eighteenth century [ill. 5].

Enfilade doorways in Aruküla run into stocky painted pillars. Besides, the painted surfaces above the doors are not in the centre of the doors – it is thought that the doors were moved in relation to their original classicist-style position during the reconstruction works in the beginning of the twentieth century [ill. 6].

The third room with the discovered paintings is located right next to the vestibule on the other side of the manor, and it is a strange small room with a contemporary interior that leads to a spectacular hall. The paintings found in this room cover three walls and depict an imitation of marble blocks. A similar surface continues in the vestibule; however, the paintings have not been preserved there. This discovery is very important for the architectural history of the manor,

3 Hilkka Hiiop, http://moisakoolid.wiseman.ee/ekraan3#19_saj_algus/arukula.



3. Founded coating, photo by Villu Pink, 2014
Gruntas



4. A figure, photo by Villu Pink, 2014
Figūra



5. Similar figures in Kiltsi manor house, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2015
Panašios figūros Kiltsi dvare



6. Enfilade doorways in Aruküla, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2015

Anfiladinis durų išdėstymas Arukiulos dvare



7. Classical paintings in the lobby, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2015

Klasikinē tapyba vestibulyje

as it helps to explain the room planning – the vestibule and the small room leading to the hall may have originally constituted one big room, and the partition wall between these two rooms was added later. At the same time, the room with earlier paintings was plastered; a cavetto vault and a new classical ceiling painting that is also a finely modelled ornament were added [ill. 7].

Among other tasks, a serious challenge was the restoration-conservation of the south-eastern illusory window niches.

The Estonian art historian Ants Hein writes, ‘In General Toll’s old age, the Aruküla manor house received another decoration – landscape views were painted on the second floor of the south-eastern illusory window niches.’ This is a unique decoration in Estonia and the entire region. It is remarkable that

one of the two windows is still in a very good condition. The other window is almost destroyed. On the well-preserved window we can see a view of the Koeru church. The chapels depicted in the picture were already destroyed by the middle of the nineteenth century. Therefore, the well-known Estonian art historian Villem Raam suggests that it may have been painted in 1838–1840 [ill. 8].⁴

As was already mentioned, two paintings were in a completely different condition. One painting was very well preserved, but the second one was almost totally deteriorated. It was not until scaffolding was assembled and window frames were dismantled that it was

4 Ants Hein, *Ajalooline õiend ja arhitektuuriajalooliselt väärtuslike detailide inventeerimine*, Archives A-3861, ERA 5025_002_0005356, Tallinnas, 2000, p. 22.



8. View to Koeru church, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2014

Koeru bažnyčios vaizdas

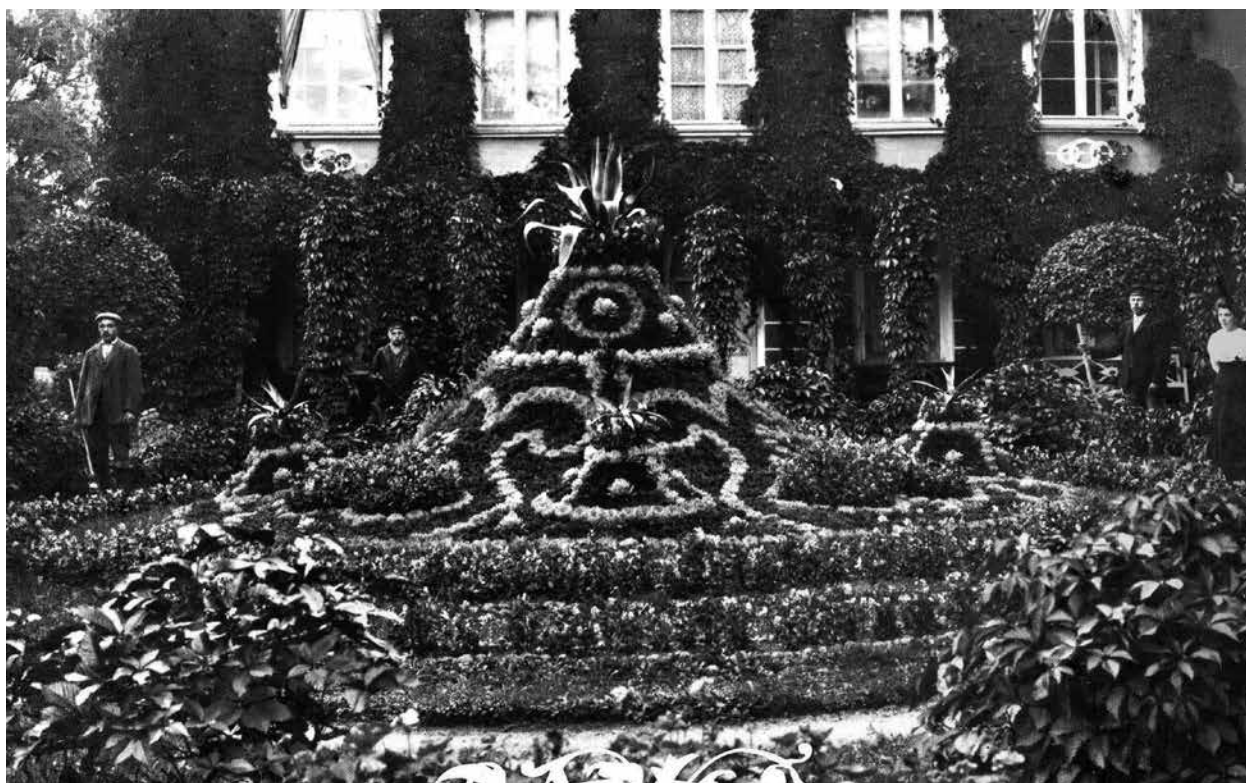


9. Deteriorated painting, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2014

Prastos būklės sienų tapyba

possible to take a closer look at the paintings. The aim of the visual observation was, first of all, to determine the condition of the largely deteriorated painting. The main reason for the damage was a broken window-pane, through which rainwater had been entering and destroying most of the painting [ill. 9]. With the help of a single preserved painting fragment it was possible to distinguish some figures. Observation showed that it was a landscape painting with two recognisable objects in the background. In the background, near the forest, it was possible to see a yellow building of grandiose measurements, which could be recognised as the main building of Aruküla manor. On the left side of the painting, the roof and the wings of the building could be seen. On the road that ran from the lower right side to the upper left side, there was a barely recognisable shape of a rider. Based on the description one could say that these two paintings were practically painted from the same place looking in different directions: one towards the church, and the other towards the manor house. This becomes clear from the conversations with the locals and historical pictures, which clearly show that the old windmill was located somewhere on the present site of the municipal hall. An old photo with a view of the south-eastern frontal wall of the manor house was also found. In the picture, one can see a landscape and different light-dark colours [ill. 10]. The ground layer of the painting was damaged and had several dense holes, several traces of flow-downs and a larger area of damaged finishing in the middle part.

Only the surrounding strip of the ornament, the greater part of the sky, a forest depicted on the right side, part of the central shrubs, fragments of a windmill and several fragments of a rider had been preserved. The preserved pieces of single colour still gave some hope for a possibility to restore the painting to some extent.



10. Historical view of the south-eastern frontal wall,
 photo by M. Öömann, J. Vali's private collection, 1910
 Istorinė sienų tapyba ant pietrytinės frontalinės sienos

THE RESTORATION PROCESS OF THE PAINTINGS

The first task in the restoration of the paintings in the window niche was to conduct a background research and laboratory examination to determine the adhesive and the pigments. Samples were taken from the ornamental strip of the damaged window and the green colour of the landscape to determine the pigment.

The conception and objective of the restoration was to expose the original as much as possible. The first task was to conserve the preserved parts, and the second, to highlight the aesthetic whole through retouching, while avoiding retouching any parts without proof.

The following activities were implemented:

- The first task was to fix the original according to the action plan. The colour separated from the

part of the ornament was infected with the substance *Medium für Konsolidierung*. Part of the painting was fixed with *paraloid B72* in acetone (5–7%).

- Plaster losses were filled with lime-sand plaster and smoothed over with finer lime-marble filler.
- The surface necessary for retouching was undercoated with casein cover.
- Retouching was done with the planned casein paint. The reason behind this choice was that the new colour would not be stronger than the material used in the original. Since the lab results did not answer the question whether water glass was used as an adhesive, it was decided to use a more familiar adhesive.
- Retouching provided the general background that could be followed based on several



11. Retouched window, photo by Heli Tuksam, 2014

Retušuotas langas

preserved colour fragments. It was not possible to restore the graphics in the parts where it was completely missing. The idea was to follow the same general impression as in the historical photo. The largest problem was the road with a rider. The original paint on the surface was completely destroyed. Therefore, the surface was covered with broken white paint to reduce the strong contrast and to highlight the preserved image of the rider.

- The missing ornamental parts were restored by stencil printing following the original.
- On the right of the well-preserved window, the pigment was lightly fixed only in the damaged parts. The plaster loss was filled with lime plaster and small colour damages were removed [ill. 11].

The main achievement could be the reappearance of the destroyed painting. Although the detailed painted graphics was not restored, the general composition and logic was recreated through a combination of readable colour remains. The main aim was achieved; the missing image appeared again. The discovery brought great pleasure to the local inhabitants, because no one could remember the existence of the destroyed painting.

One of the most important moments in this process was very carefully conducted historical background studies and the studies of interior decoration layers. Superficiality in this matter may result in the irreversible destruction of evidence. At best, this essential information may remain hidden for an indeterminate period.

The described object contains high-quality paintings that enrich Estonian visual culture, and the Aruküla manor house is one of the most remarkable pieces of art in this cultural area.

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Hilkka Hiiop, http://moisakoolid.wiseman.ee/ekraan3#19_saj_algus/arukula.



12. A view of the painted illusory window niches,
photo by Heli Tuksam, 2015

Tapytų iliuzorinių lango nišų vaizdas

VIENO SIENŲ TAPYBOS KŪRINIO ISTORIJA

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SANTRAUKA

REIKŠMINIAI ŽODŽIAI: mokomasis dvarų projektas, architektūriniai dažų tyrimai, istorinė kambarių puošyba, reti tapybos kūriniai, konservavimo procesas.

Tartu meno kolegijos restauratoriai džiaugiasi, kad per pastarąjį dešimtmetį Estijoje buvo restauruoti keli išskirtinės architektūros objektai, tiek studentai, tiek dėstytojai galėjo dalyvauti šiame darbe įgyvendindami mokymo procesą. Per Europos ekonominės erdvės finansinius mechanizmus gauti fondai kultūros paveldo tvarkymui buvo paskirti dvarams ir paskirstyti per du

laikotarpius. Taigi atsirado proga dalyvauti kelių dvarų restauravimo darbuose (2004–2009 ir 2009–2014). Stambesni projektai – Voltveti, Hiiu-Suuremõisos (vok. Grossenhof), Arukiulos ir Feynos (Vääna) dvarai. Restauravimo darbai paskatino atrasti turtingą istorinę informaciją, kuri tapo vertingu indėliu į mūsų kultūrinį paveldą.

Šio straipsnio tikslas yra pateikti istorinę informaciją apie Arukiulos dvarą, aprašyti restauravimo darbus, atradimus ir atkreipti dėmesį į unikalią sienų tapybą ant dvaro pastato išorinių sienų.

Arukiulos dvaras tapo nepriklausomu XVII a. pradžioje. Vieni garsesnių jo savininkų – von Knorringų šeima nuo 1753 m. ir von Tollų šeima nuo 1820 m. XVIII a. 8 deš., kai dvaras priklausė F. G. von Knorringui, buvo baigtas statyti reprezentacinis dvaro pastatas. Apie 1800 m. jis nukentėjo nuo gaisro, o XIX a. 3 deš. pradžioje buvo perstatytas klasicizmo stiliumi. Dvaro pastatą papuošė reprezentacinis kolonų portikas ir nuostabus stiuko

dekoras. XIX a. 4–5 deš. pietrytinių langų nišose buvo nutapyti du peizažiniai Koeru vaizdai. Pastatas von Tollų šeimai priklausė iki Estijos Respublikos pradžios. Nuo 1920 m. dvaro pastate įsikūrė mokykla.

2014 m. prasidėjo platesni dvaro rūmų restauravimo darbai. Keliais etapais buvo atlikti pastato polichromijos tyrimai. Atrodė, kad garsiajam dvarui būdinga interjero puošyba liks paslaptis. Vis dėlto 2014 m. vasarą po storu tinko sluoksniu buvo aptikti ankstyvajam klasicizmui būdingi puošybos elementai. Iki šiol nepavyko nustatyti, kada ši sienų tapyba buvo sukurta. Gal ją galima priskirti XVIII a. pabaigos apdailai, bet gal ir XX a. 3 deš. puošybai. Aptikti fragmentai yra konservuoti ir naujas piešinys pritaikytas prie estetinės visumos.

Langų nišų tapybos restauravimo procesas pasirodė gana sudėtingas, nes abiejų tapybos kūrinių būklė gerokai skyrėsi. Vienas jų – su vaizdu į Koeru bažnyčią – buvo labai gerai išsilaikęs. Antrojo tapybos kūrinio vaizdo nebebuvo galima įžiūrėti. Didžiausias iššūkis buvo nustatyti, ar įmanoma restauruoti du greta esančius tapybos kūrinius kaip harmoningą visumą. Tik pastačius pastolius ir išmontavus langų rėmus, atsirado galimybė atidžiau pažvelgti į kūrinius. Remiantis vieninteliu išlikusiu tapybos fragmentu, buvo galima išskirti kelias figūras. Stebėjimai leido teigti, kad abu kūriniai buvo nutapyti praktiškai iš tos pačios vietos, žvelgiant skirtingomis kryptimis: vienas – link bažnyčios, o kitas – link dvaro pastato. Tiriant istorinius duomenis buvo rasta sena nuotrauka su vaizdu į pietrytinę frontalinę dvaro pastato sieną. Nuotraukoje daugiausia matomas peizažas ir įvairios šviesios bei tamsios spalvos.

Restauravimo darbai buvo baigti 2015 m. rugpjūčio mėnesį. Po kruopštaus restauravimo prašmatnus pastatas atgavo savo spindesį ir šiandien jau yra tapęs reikšminga kultūros paveldo dalimi.