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PRETTY COLOURS:
Chromatic Analysis of the Palette
Of Some Renowned 14th Century Fresco Painters

The visual manifestation of painterly artistic expression conceived of carefully selected motives, traditional or innovative iconographic patterns, recognizable historical or social dimensions, as well as individual creative ideas appears in several different constitutional layers in the eyes of its beholder. It strikes his attention with the subject, wakes his excitement with the compositional design, animates his interest with the modelation of the forms and impresses him with the optical effects transformed into a specific palette of colors. As a component of the painterly discourse, the colors represent the finishing touch of every work of art, they are the most refined furnish of each ensemble, a beam of creative exaltation in the sphere of optical experiments that gives the painting its sophisticated and most individual glow. The color and its structural elements, such are: the incarnate, the gamut, the nuances, the spectrum of hues and the resonance of tones are often the most imposing feature of a certain work of art and accordingly, the most recognizable quality of one's painterly artistic carrier. In that regard, Giotto di Bondone was the one to lighten the traditional medieval fresco palette¹, Botticelli has enriched it with a cluster of fresh and juicy nuances²; the great Leonardo softened the optical spectrum transforming it into a hallucinatory tinted mist³, while Rembrandt invented the golden patina of his noble and gracious coloristic accords⁴.

In the sphere of Byzantine painterly expression, where the patterns and the canons ruled dominantly with the world of creative ideas, the colors became

¹ J. T. Paoletti – G. M. Radke, *Art in Renaissance Italy*, New Jersey 2005, 71-76; also see: N. Wolf, *Giotto di Bondone (1267-1337)*, London 2006 and J. Poeschke, A. Quattrone, G. Rolli, *Italian Frescoes: The Age of Giotto, 1280-1400*, London 2005

² M. L. Ricati, Botticelli, Milano 1974, 18-80; also see: B. Deimling, *Sandro Botticelli 1444/45-1510*, London 2000 and F. Zölner, *Botticelli*, London 2009

³ B. Nardini, Vita di Leonardo, Firenze 1974, 147-156; also see: S. Bramly, S. Reynolds, L. da Vinci, *Leonardo: The Artist and the Man*, London 1995 and F. Zölner, *Leonardo*, London 2010

⁴ B. Haak, Rembrandt, New York 1972, 225-250; also see: G. Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book*, London 2006



Fig. 1 Master Eutykhios, Holy Mother of God Peribleptos in Ohrid (1295), *Christ as Angel of the Great Assembly*

Сл. 1 Мајстор Еутихије, Света Богородица Перивлепта у Охриду (1295), *Христос Анђео Великог савета*

one of the decisive elements of one's artistic sensibility, of his painterly temperament and of his individual approach to the horizon of optical issues and illuminations. In that regard, the coloristic spectrum of a certain fresco ensemble often becomes a leading argument for the Byzantine scholars to detect and define the identity of its author, particularly in cases with open or pending attributions⁵. As the most striking trade mark of the fresco masters from the medieval epoch, the coloristic diapason that encompasses the specific treatment of light in one's painterly vision, as well as the characteristic chromatic values and optical qualities, can be detected as a sphere of a great artistic invention and a highly recognizable visual creation. In that sense, some of the fresco painters who have worked in the territory of present-day Macedonia in the course of the 14th century have given their remarkable contribution to the domain of coloristic experiments of Byzantine artistic production, creating their own distinctive painterly idiolect. In this paper, we will just shortly explicate the chromatic portfolios of some of the leading fresco masters of that century and analyze some of the most distinguished achievements in the painting of the Paleologan era.

The first to be mentioned is the fresco arrangement created for the church of the *Holy Mother of God Peribleptos* in Ohrid by the painting studio of Michael and

⁵ E. Dimitrova, *The "X" Colours: The Artistic Ateliers, the Stylistic Handwriting, the palette Range and the Appliance of Science*, Balkan Symposium on Archeometry: Science Meets Archaeology and Art History, Ohrid 2008, 108



Fig. 2 Master Michael Astrapa, Saint George in Staro Nagoričino (1316-18), *Part of the painterly program in the apse*

Сл. 2 Мајстор Михајло Астрапа, Свети Ђорђе у Старом Нагоричину (1316-18), *Део сликаног програма у олтару*

Eutychios, an attribution confirmed by the preserved signatures of both masters⁶. Executed in 1295 while the later was still an active leader of the workshop⁷, this fresco ensemble displays features of an invasive energetic outburst of the forms and dynamic charge of the compositional matrixes, characteristic of the 13th century breakthrough of the Paleologan painterly expression. In that regard, the theatrically composed sights, the vivid gestures of the depicted figures and the dramatic whirlpool of movements soaked in the exciting rhythm of motion⁸, were complemented by the dynamic resonances of the coloristic palette with a single purpose – the promotion of a fresh artistic vision, permeated with the trenchant hues of emotional suggestibility. Therefore, Eutychios designed a vivacious and exuberant spectrum of colors, enlivened across the walls of the temple in a restless and playful panorama

⁶ П. Миљковић-Пепек, *Делото на зографите Михајло и Еутихиј*, Скопје 1967, B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting in the Age of King Milutin*, Beograd 1998, 227-228

⁷ М. Марковић, *Уметничка делатност Михаила и Евтихија. Садашња знања, спорна питања и правци будућих истраживања*, Зборник Народног Музеја XVII/2, Београд 2005, 97-99

⁸ E. Dimitrova, *On the Mise-en-scene and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, Macedonian Heritage 29, Skopje 2006, 4-8 ; E. Dimitrova, *Le radici adriatico-balcaniche: il monumento dell'affresco bizantino e l'esempio della Macedonia*, Belleze e tradizione, Castel Bolognese 2011, 91-94



Fig. 3 Master Michael Astrapa, Saint Nicetas at Banjani (1323/4), The Marriage Feast at Cana

Сл. 3 Мајстор Михаило Астрапа, Свети Никита у Бањанима (1323/4), Свадба у Кани

of picturesque nuances⁹. The strong light contrasts and the intensive colour gamut, the exciting clash between the painted nuances, the interplay of light and darkness and its role in the shaping of the picturesque vistas, as well as the glowing flashes of the saturated valeurs - reveal the explosive painterly temperament of the master embodied in the optically ecstatic palette of this fresco repertory.

In that regard, the powerful accents of yellow, the brilliant hues of the red gamut, the unrestrained scream of the purple nuances and the mystical depth of the blue cobalt capture the visual effects of an art woven with an accelerated rhythm, a pulsating energy and a fierce outburst of spectacular performance. *Amethyst blue* to open the vast horizons of the composition, *Amaranth red* to give the sights a delightful nuance of fresh optical glow, *Chartreuse green* to accelerate the juiciness of the view and *Coral yellow* to stabilize the background - are the basic elements of the incarnate, applied in the painted cycles of the Peribleptos church. Optically exciting, dynamically penetrating and visually attractive, the colors of the palette of master Eutychios sparkle with their inner chromatic tension and radiate with their restless pictorial energy. Dark *Aqua blue* for the celestial backgrounds, intensive *Pastel brown* to accelerate the dynamics of the depicted landscapes, *Platinum gray* for the massive architectural coulisses and enchanting *Scarlet red* to accentuate the dramatic motion of the figures - comprise the specific spectrum of colours that sparkle in the interior of the Ohrid temple. Massive in the forms and rude in the modelation of the com-

⁹ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, Milano 2006, 161



Fig. 4 Master John Theoritanos, Holy Mother of God at Mateič (1348-52), *The Vision of St. Peter of Alexandria*

Сл. 4 Мајстор Јован Теоријанос, Света Богородица у Матеичу (1348-52). Визија светог Петра Александриског

positional elements, fresh in the rhythm of the movements and expressive in the depicted atmosphere¹⁰, the painting of Eutychios and Michael in the Peribleptos church gushes with a rainbow of row accents of the palette in the urge to create a thrilling panorama of strikingly imposing visual effects.

In the first decades of the 14th century when Michael Astrapa took the lead over the mentioned painting studio¹¹, he developed a highly remarkable artistic handwriting appropriate to the needs and challenges of the Classicist phase in the development of the Paleologan cultural production. In that regard, the symmetrical arrangement of the painterly elements, the proportional constellation of the compositional schemes, the well balanced visual structure of the scenes, as well as the harmonious rhythm of the festal motion of the depicted characters, as basic elements of the fresco ensemble in the *Staro Nagoričino* church (1316-1318)¹², were exceptionally toned with a wealth of hues from the exuberant palette of this master. Rich in the nuances, picturesque in the optical

¹⁰ E. Dimitrova, *On the Dynamics of the Compositional Structures in the Paleologue Painting on the Territory of Macedonia*, Macedonian Heritage 32, Skopje 2008, 4-6

¹¹ М. Марковић, Уметничка делатност Михаила и Евтихија. *Садашња знања, спорна питања и правци будућих истраживања*, 100-101

¹² Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, Београд 1993, 127-138; idem, *Serbian Medieval Painting in the Age of King Milutin*, 239-242



Fig. 5 Disciple of master John Theorianos, Saint Demetrius at Marko's monastery (1376/7), *Great Entrance in the apse*

Сл. 5 Ученик мајстора Јована Теоријана, Свети Димитрије у Марковом манастиру (1376/7), *Велики вход у олтару*

qualities and exciting in the quantity of visual effects, the diapason of colors designed by Master Astrapa for the painted decoration in Staro Nagoričino church ripples across the grandiose interior of the edifice with its noble and luxurious tonal amplitude. In that regard, the essential elements of the artistic handwriting of Michael Astrapa, confirmed by his signatures left in the Nagoričino fresco monument¹³, such are the balanced rhythm of the depicted action, the gracious movements of the figural participants in the illustrated events and the moderate gestures of the saintly images skillfully incorporated in the faultlessly structured compositional patterns, are perfectly tinted with the luxuriously harmonious palette of the great master. Tonal and warm in the shades, opulent and saturated in the nuances, as well as vigorous and playful in the resonance of hues, the coloristic spectrum of the Staro Nagoričino fresco ensemble resounds with a powerful energy of a glamorous painterly oratory, composed in the glory of Byzantine artistic creation.

In that sense, Michael Astrapa applied rich and highly luminescent coloristic palette to match the proportionally structured and ceremonially elaborated rhythm of the painted arrangement. Noble reds, delicate blues, festal greens and soft yellow-brown colors comprise the exquisitely gracious gamut of master Astrapa, which permeate the harmoniously balanced compositions with its

¹³ М. Миљковић-Пепек, *Пишуваните податоци за зографите Михаил Астрапа и Еутихиј и за некои нивни соработници*, Гласник на Институтот за национална историја IV/1-2, Скопје 1960, 141-161; idem, *Делото на зографите Михаило и Евтихиј*, 18-23; Б. Тодић, *Старо Нагоричино*, 26-27

Fig. 6 Metropolitan
John, Saint
Andreas at
Treska (1388/9),
Entombment

Сл. 6 Митрополит
Јован зограф,
Свети Андреја на
Тресци (1388/9),
*Христово
полагање у гроб*



ritually solemn dynamism. The subtle hues of the delicately toned *Byzantine blue* as a dominant tone of the composition, the succulent fullness of the warm *Cardinal red* to stress the dynamic atmosphere of the scene, the deep sonority of the *Cornell red* for an exquisite optical impression, the fine resounding of the *Ruby pink* for the plastic shapes of the coulisses and the soft shades of the *Cadmium green* spectrum for the costumes - sparkle in the painted decoration of the Nagoričino church as a ceremonial flame burning in honor of the festive ritual of artistic creation¹⁴. Also, the *Steel blue* for depiction of the skies, the *Jade green* for elaboration of the landscapes, the *Tangerine orange* for illumination of the costumes and the *Golden brown* for maintaining the richly ornamented architectural coulisses in the backdrop of the compositions, are highly recognizable components of the painterly idiom of master Astrapa in the Nagoričino church. By coloring the proportionally structured scenes with the harmoniously balanced tones of his gamut, Michael Astrapa designed a perfectly nuanced palette for the execution of the exquisitely composed and ceremonially structured painterly rhythm of the ensemble.

On the other hand, when his main task was to infuse an energetic stream of fresh and imposing motion in the construction of the dynamic principles of the compositional design as in *St. Nicetas* church (1323-1324)¹⁵, Michael

¹⁴ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 166-168

¹⁵ E. Dimitrova, *On the Dynamics of the Compositional Structures in the Paleologue*

Astrapa saturated his palette with rich shades of the pastel spectrum to intensify the visual effects of a great resonance of movements, gestures and mimicry. Due to his intention to create a painterly vision fulfilled with a cheerful and merry atmosphere, lively gesticulation of the protagonists in the scenes and unrestrained dynamism of the depicted events, Michael Astrapa designed a fresco panorama soaked in the rhythmic spirit of lively and joyful festivity. Accordingly, the rich color palette and the subtle tonal transition follow the perfectly conceived rhythm of the compositions, nuancing the views with harmonized resonance of an abundantly colored painterly structure. The cold harmonies of the blue and green shades that spread over the church walls intertwine the forms with the refined lusciousness of the incarnate, while the warmer hues of the red, pink and delicately shaded ochre come to life with their full glow in the deep blaze of the coloristic resonance. Although being painted at the end of his long, exciting and fruitful career¹⁶, St. Nicetas' fresco arrangement did not lose any of the fresh and powerful accents of the inventive and illuminative Michael Astrapa's coloristic palette. Vivacious and untamed, opulent and vibrant, the chromatic spectrum of this ensemble radiates with a great energetic charge, concordant with the highly dynamized spirit of the designed iconographic programme.

In that direction, Michael Astrapa in St. Nicetas applied noble *Royal blue* for the background and intensive *Copper red* for the costumes - to accentuate the commotion of the depicted characters. He put shiny *Coral pink* to impress with the enchanting tranquility of the view and mild *Olive green* for the facial shades and wrinkles - to express the inner agitation of the images. He also laid warm and delicate *Auburn* for the furniture and pale *Sandy brown* for the architectural setting, as well as rich *Terra Cotta orange* to enhance the festal atmosphere of the scenes. In that manner, the colors live their full-blooded life in collaboration with the dynamic shapes of the drawing, with the playful design of the compositions, as well as with the energetic amplitude of the entire fresco programme. Saturated blues and greens for the landscapes, warm reds for the clothing and the depicted interiors, bright grays for the architectural backdrops and spicy yellow tones for the facial expression - comprise the secondary layer of characteristic palette of colors in the St. Nicetas' painterly arrangement. United in a single and unique dynamic coherence of the compositional design achieved through the exceptional articulation of the painterly elements and the perfect integration of the rhythmic standards in the spatial organization of the scenes¹⁷, the playful forms and the picturesque colors in St. Nicetas fresco painting enjoy the bliss of a solid and well-balanced visual cohabitation.

Couple of decades latter, towards the middle of the 14th century, when master *John Theorianos* promoted his poetic approach towards construction of

Painting on the Territory of Macedonia, 9-11

¹⁶ М. Марковић, Уметничка делатност Михаила и Евтихија. *Садашња знања, спорна питања и правци будућих истраживања*, 105

¹⁷ E. Dimitrova, *On the Mise-en-scene and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 12-16; eadem, *Le radici adriatico-balcaniche: il monumento dell'affresco bizantino e l'esempio della Macedonia*, 97-100

lyrical vistas permeated with graceful elegance and exotic narration, the translucent atmosphere of the scenes implied an entirely different palette, light in the gamut, pale in the nuances and cold in the tonal resonance. Arising from the deep sea of poetic melancholy, master Theorianos' color range, appropriate to the delicate taste of his commissioners, melts into a vast horizon of sophisticated and highly esoteric harmonies. The cold green spectrum of the painted ensemble in St. Nicholas in Ljuboten (1344-1345)¹⁸, the exciting blue tonal amplitude of the decoration executed on the second floor of the St. Sophia Cathedral (1345-1346)¹⁹, the crystal ecru shades permeating the scenes depicted in the Gallery of Archbishop Gregory (ca. 1350)²⁰, as well as the transparent violet horizons in the fresco arrangement of the Holy Mother of God church at Matejče (1348-1352)²¹ are the most recognizable references of Theorianos' poetic sensibility and of his delicate taste for refined coloristic nuances. In that sense, *Lavender pink* is used for a refined unification of the spatial features in the composition and *Ash gray* is maintained as its counterpart in the scene; *Blizzard blue* is applied to stress the celestial atmosphere, while *Jasmine white* is employed for the impressive optical effects; *Magnolia white* accentuates the courtly elegance of the depicted characters and *Golden bronze* stands for the noble accords of the figures' graceful motion. *Aquamarine* and *Lavender blue*, gently scattered over the walls, ennoble the exotic vistas with a touch of glamorous glow, while the cold *Perl Aqua green* nuances the depicted views with a beam of illuminative and luxurious radiance. Last, but not least, master Theorianos' rich *Platinum gold* used for an aristocratic and festive atmosphere of the spectacles, completes the tender, yet solemn temper of the depicted events²². Luminous in the tonal amplitude and almost transparent in the resonance of hues, the palette of colors of John Theorianos creates a broad spectrum of rousing optical illusions, corresponding to his poetically refined artistic vision.

Contrary to the delicate predisposition of Theorianos' painterly discourse elevated in the refined spheres of lyrical inspiration, his disciple who created several fresco ensembles in the second half of the 14th century²³ arises from the spiritual depths of expressiveness, emerges out of the dramatic whirlpool of intensive visual energy and dives into the ecstatic emotional turbulence of his passionate and dynamic artistic handwriting. The sharp tone of figural mobility in the arrangement executed in the south chapel of St. Virgin Peribleptos (1364-1365), the dynamic syncopes of the expressive visual context in the fresco panorama of St. Virgin Bolnička (1368), the invasive plasticity in the modeling of the forms in St. Virgin Peštanska (1370), as well as the flaming intensity of all painterly elements in the ensemble of Marko's monastery (1376/1377)

¹⁸ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 181-182

¹⁹ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското сидно сликарство од XIV век*, Охрид 1980, 78-79

²⁰ В. Ј. Ђурић, *Византијске фреске у Југославији*, Београд 1974, 68

²¹ Е. Димитрова, *Манастир Матејче*, Скопје 2002, 240-243

²² S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 181-191

²³ Ц. Грозданов, *Охридското сидно сликарство од XIV век*, 138-150

are soaked in the dark tonal amplitude of his dramatically explosive coloristic range²⁴. The powerful expression of emotional unrest of the figures, the deep mysticism and the vigorous passion of the depicted images radiate with bitter outflow of tension, reflected in the saturated and optically contrasting colours that burn with their crude and obscure energy. Abandoning the classicistic artistic tendencies in creation of the compositional design, as well as in calibration of the chromatic values of the palette, the painter of the mentioned fresco ensembles stands out with the restless spirit of the forms and the agitated pathos of the palette, as most recognizable references of his genuine painterly handwriting.

In his strikingly imposing and emotionally tentative palette of colors, the Duke blue gives the sights a noble shade of luminous decoration; the *Maroon red* accentuates the dynamic charge of the depicted action, while the *Arsenic gray* stabilizes the compositional scheme with its cold, solid and shiny hues. In the pictures of Passion, executed on the walls of his most renowned work – the fresco arrangement in Marko's monastery, the *Ultramarine* cries with the unrestrained energy of human drama, the *Burgundy red* glows as fresh blood dripping from an open wound and the *Burnt amber* adds plastic accents to the modelation of the forms. Where the *Dark coral* saturates the views with a warm gamut of explosive tension, the *Chrome yellow* refreshes the vistas with the cold spectrum of depression and grief, while the cold *Indigo blue* deepens the sights with its dark and mystical nuances. Finally, the venomous *Crimson* in its most aggressive and deadly menacing variant configures the optical contrasts of the picture with a ravaging passion, as if springing directly out of the abyss of human suffering. Nuancing his frescoes composed of suggestively energetic drawings, expressive plasticity of the form and severe exposition of dynamic effects with the passionate color gamut of his palette, the master of Marko's monastery created contrasting optical effects never before encountered in Byzantine mural painting²⁵. The dramatic clash of the depicted forms, the restless commotion of the figures and the anxious atmosphere of the sights, as basic principles of his fresco ensembles, are richly toned with the dramatic hues of his saturated and mystical palette that covers the expressive iconography as a dark veil of unrestrained emotional resonance²⁶.

Entirely different is the constellation of coloristic effects in the palette of Metropolitan John, a painter who, in the course of the chaotic and highly uncertain historic circumstances at the end of the 14th century, created the luxurious panorama of full-blooded forms, glamorous atmosphere of the scenes, warm sensibility of the images and noble accords of the chromatic diapason in *St. Andreas* church, near Skopje (1388/1389)²⁷. Energetic in its painterly expres-

²⁴ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 204-206

²⁵ E. Dimitrova, *On the Dynamics of the Compositional Structures in the Paleologue Painting on the Territory of Macedonia*, 17-19

²⁶ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 206

²⁷ J. Prolovic, *Die Kirche des heiligen Andreas an der Treska*, Wien 1997, 206-214; E. Dimitrova, V. Lilčić, K. Antevska, A. Vasilevski, *Matka. Kulturno nasledstvo*, Ohrid 2011, 151-15

sion and graceful in the emotional charge of the compositions, this fresco ensemble ravishes with the luscious exuberance of artistic execution of his ultra-talented and highly renowned author²⁸. In that regard, he used *Coral red* to enhance the dramatic tension of the depicted action, *Salmon pink* to link the intensive and the dark nuances into a chromatic unity and *Harvest gold* to accomplish the uncompromising anatomic plasticity of the forms. He also put *Cobalt blue* to mark the deep sonority of the vistas, deep *Carmine red* to accentuate the energetic density of the illustrated events and soft *Emerald green* to achieve the vividness of the visual impression. He laid *Mahogany brown* for the ceremonial atmosphere of the sights, *Forest green* for the vast spatial configuration of the view, *Iris blue* for the glamorous costumes of the saintly figures and *Metallic Rust red* for the humanistic touch of the temper in the vistas. The favorite colors of Metropolitan John, glamorously scattered across the walls of the St. Andreas church, such are: the *Sapphire blue* for an illusionistic dimension in creation of the sight, the *Glacious gray* for the striking optical effects and the rich *Marble yellow* for the luxurious elaboration in depiction of the architectonic scenery, glow in their full chromatic blossom with an unrestrained energy of an explosive palette²⁹. On the other hand, the *Azure blue* for the distant heavenly horizons, the *Patina bronze* for the warm medium of a domesticated landscape and the rich *Mahogany red* for the dramatic atmosphere of the illustrated events are just the finishing touch of a sparkling, radiant and luxuriant coloristic gamut.

Dark or light, intensive or pale, luminescent or shady, translucent or saturated, the colors that configure the palette of the mentioned Byzantine fresco masters of the 14th century have given the final and most distinctive painterly glow to their representative ensembles. The dynamic resonances of the vivid coloring in the Peribleptos church, the harmoniously balanced tones of the color gamut in Staro Nagoricino, the playful diapason of chromatic values in St. Nicetas, the aristocratic tonal amplitude in Matejce, the agitated coloristic darkness in Marko's monastery and the energetic exuberance of the palette in St. Andreas, comprise the picturesque optical portfolios of their authors. The playful resounding of Eutychios' green spectrum, the warm tonal hues of Michael Astrapas' red incarnate, the poetic lyricism of Theorianos' pale chromatic royalty, the toxic anxiety of the dark coloristic resonance of his disciple and the graceful synchronicity of Metropolitan John's blue palette, radiate with their eternal optical values as lighten in honor of the superb creative performance of their renowned masters.

²⁸ E. Dimitrova, *On the Mise-en-scene and the Backdrops. Scenes from the Dramatopee of the Macedonian Medieval Painting*, 26-28

²⁹ S. Korunovski – E. Dimitrova, *Macedonia. L'arte medievale dal IX al XV secolo*, 206-210

Елизабета Димитрова
ПРИВЛАЧНЕ БОЈЕ: *Хроматска анализа палете*
неких од најпознатијих фреско мајстора XIV века

Као један од структуралних елемената ликовног дискурса, боја и све њене одлике: инкарнат, нијансе, спектар валера и резонат тоналне амплитуде, често су најкарактеристична ознака неког уметничког дела, као и специфичног и препознатљивог „рукописа“ његовог аутора. То се нарочито односи на византијски ликовни израз, где је, у оквиру владајућих програмских и иконографских канона, боја постала главна одредница ауторовог сензибилитета и темперамента, као и његовог индивидуалног приступа хоризонту оптичких експеримената и илуминација. У том контексту, неки од водећих мајстора византиског ликовног стваралаштва XIV века дали су значајан допринос домену колористичког изрази, креирајући свој препознатљив ликовни идиом. Са циљем да расветлимо релативно непознату сферу хроматских карактеристика појединих византијских мајстора, у нашем раду осврћемо се на водеће зографе који су у XIV stoleћу радили на македонској територији, продуцирајући неке од најзначајнијих уметничких дела тог времена. Први међу њима, мајстор Еутихије, вођа ателјеа које је осликало Богородицу Перивлепту у Охриду (1295), дизајнирао је динамичну и јарку колористичку палету за свежу уметничку визију, проникнуту сировим тоновима емоционалне сугестибилности (плаво као аметист, жуто као корал, сиво као платина, пастел смеђо и скерлетно црвени тон). Његов партнер у раду, Михајло Астрада је, у Нагоричину (1316-18), обојио церемонијално конципирани програм деликатно хармонизираним палетом (византијско плаво, рубин црвено, меки зелени спектар, рафинирани ружичасти валери), док је у Св. Никити (1323/4) динамичне иконографске матрице заситио интензивнијим хроматским квалитетима (краљевско плаво, бакарне црвене нијансе, маслинасто зелене сенке, препланула теракота). Пионир дворског стила на македонској територији, песнички инспирисани Јован Теоријан осветлио је колористичку палету свог сликарства племенитим бојама хладног спектра (љубичасто као лаванда, бело као магнолија и јасмин, аквамарин плаво и бисерно зелени валери). Насупрот светлој и хладној Теоријановој палети, његов ученик - охридски мајстор из друге половине XIV века и аутор сликарства у Марковом манастиру (1376/7) користи тамну, енергичну и мистичну колористичку гаму која одговара експресивном и дубоко страсном програму цркве (ултрамарин и индиго плаво, тамни и рески црвени тоналитет, отровни пурпур, експлозивне зелене нијансе). На крају, отмено и сензибилно сликарство Митрополита Јована у Андреашу (1388/9), обојено је богатом гамом тонова гламурозне палете великог мајстора (кобалт, азури и сафир плаве, кармин и бакар црвене, махагони смеђе, мрамор жуте, смарагно зелене и сребрно сиве боје).