



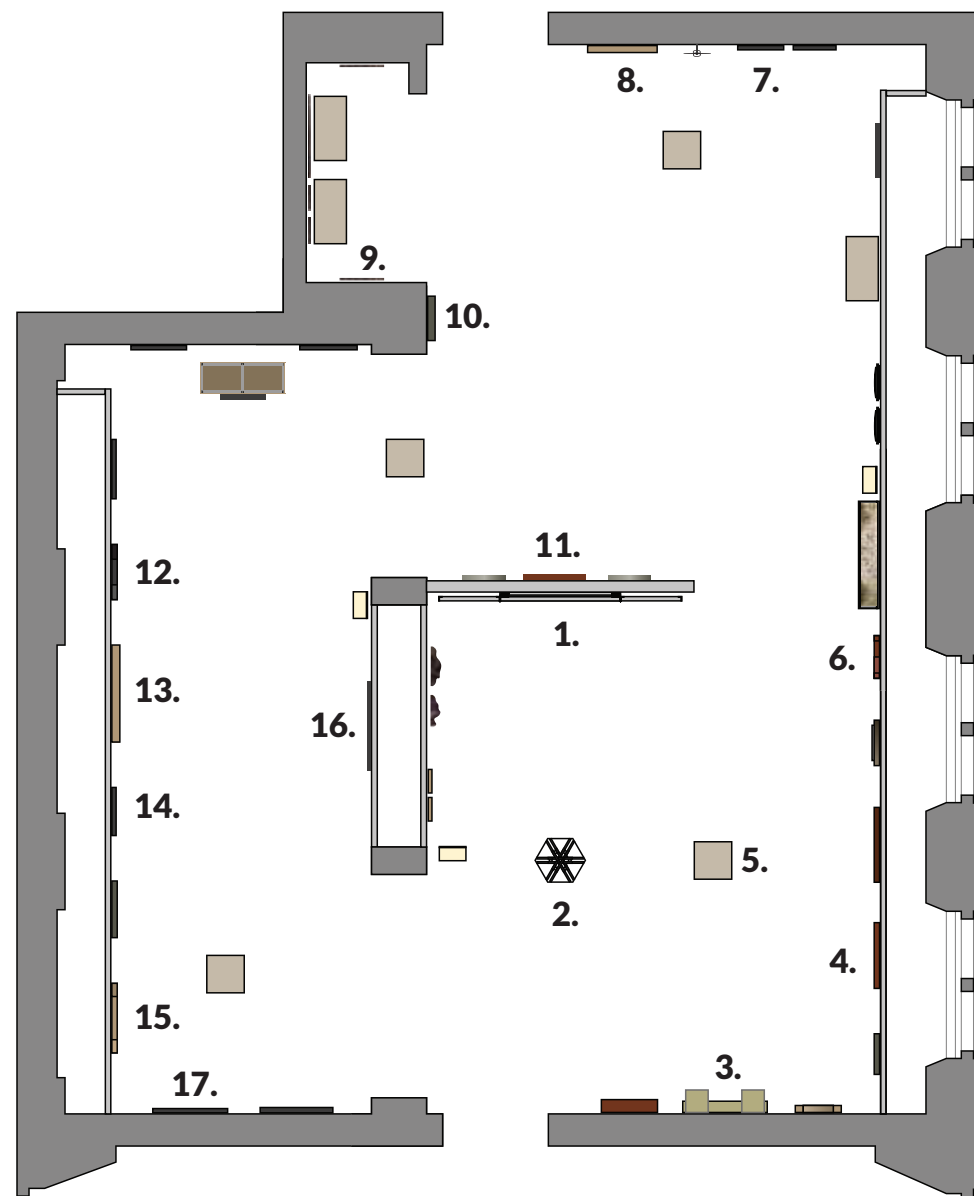
# Hidden Meanings

Art in Pomerania in the 16th and 17th Centuries

## Hidden Meanings

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# Hidden Meanings

Art in Pomerania in the  
16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Exhibition guide



The National Museum in Szczecin  
2022





## Hidden Meanings. Art in Pomerania in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries

Reformation remains one of the most influential events that shaped modern art in Pomerania. Officially introduced in the Duchy of Pomerania in 1534, preceded by several years of intensive activity of the reformers, it had an enormous impact on the way local churches were furnished, with pieces that expressed new theological beliefs, employing means of expression characteristic for Protestant art, as well as new types of liturgical vessels. At the same time, Pomerania retained relatively much of its earlier liturgical tradition, and church art consciously followed the medieval themes.

In the aftermath of the Reformation, Pomerania ended up in the Protestant circle of artistic influences, with which it was also connected by political and dynastic ties. These included mainly Saxony, Brandenburg and Mecklenburg. What is more, the courts of dukes in Szczecin and Wolgast were visited by artists from the Netherlands and Italy, among other countries, bringing in new artistic trends. Of course, these artists coming to Pomerania worked not only for the dukes, but also for the local aristocracy and city elites, as evidenced by the triptych from the church in Gryfino painted by David Redtel, the court painter of Duke John Frederick, as well as the relief with the scene of the Conversion of Saul from the Loitz townhouse in Szczecin, attributed to Hans Schenck-Scheusslich, who worked for Duke Barnim IX (XI) and Philip I.

The exhibition aims at showcasing the history of Pomerania, as well as highlighting the trends and processes visible in the artistic culture of Northern Europe during the Renaissance and early Baroque. The dissemination of works by artists from the leading centres of European art by means of graphic models was incredibly important for the art of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Pomeranian painters also readily drew inspiration from the compositions by Dutch masters, including Johannes Sadeler, as well as Flemish painters, chief among them Peter Paul Rubens, and Italian Mannerist and Baroque artists – Jacopo Tintoretto and Federico Barocci.

The layout and narrative of the exhibition correspond to the three key aspects of artistic life in Pomerania in the early modern period, which spanned from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> to the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. The first room, which was devoted to the Protestant art in Pomerania, showcases former furnishings of Lutheran churches – an altar, a baptismal font, epitaphs, liturgical vessels, as well as a unique monument of embroidery – an altar antependium. The second area of the exhibition, named





*The Court Circle*, presents works funded by the aristocracy, nobility and patricians – people who were directly linked to the ruling dynasty, featuring portraits, elements of furnishings of their mansions and epitaphs. The third hall, devoted to the European links apparent in Pomeranian art, showcases works by Pomeranian artists based on models, featuring a group of 17<sup>th</sup>-century paintings from the collection of the Museum, created in Italy, the Netherlands and Flanders – including *Saint John the Evangelist* by Bernardo Cavallino, as well as *The Great Fair*, based on the piece by David Vinckboons.

In addition to the story of Pomeranian art of the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, the exhibition outlines symbols, allegories and ideological content hidden in the works of modern art. In this period, just like throughout the Middle Ages, artists readily used motifs to represent abstract concepts and features related to the universe and the human kind. The 16<sup>th</sup> century also saw the development of emblems – allegorical literary and pictorial compositions.

In both the Lutheran and Catholic churches, art was an important medium for religious content, and thus they used works of art for proselytising – as faithful illustrations of the Old and New Testaments. In addition, they were also used to familiarise the faithful with complex theological concepts in a simplified manner. In many cases, artists also went with typology, juxtaposing scenes from the Old and New Testaments.

One of the most important tasks of art in the modern period was its moralising role, shaping proper attitudes by condemning evil and showcasing role models. Moral standards at the time were based on the Old and New Testaments, as well as on ancient literature and history. In Dutch painting, moralistic content was also hidden in genre scenes, as well as still lifes and landscapes.

These symbols, allegories and emblems – usually obvious to viewers of the past – can be difficult for modern viewers to understand and often require further clarification.





Informational text panels, likely providing details about the artworks in the gallery.









# 1. Altar from Gryfino

David Redtel (1543–1591), Szczecin, 1580

oil, tempera, board, 222 × 441 cm

from the St Nicholas Church (currently the Church of the Nativity of Blessed Virgin Mary) in Gryfino

inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1169

The central scene of the triptych features three crosses above the crowd of people gathered at Golgotha and the distant panorama of Jerusalem. The calm figure of the crucified Christ depicted from the front is contrasted with the dynamic figures of the criminals. The so-called “penitent thief” turns towards Christ, while the “impenitent thief”, depicted from behind, turns his head towards the viewer. The withered tree pictured behind him is a symbol of death and an irreversibly lost chance for salvation. The scene is explained by texts inscribed on banners above the cross with fragments of the Gospel of St John (John 3:14-16) and the epistle of St Peter (1 Peter 2:24), calling for renouncing the sin, and proclaiming that whoever believes in Christ will gain eternal life. The triumph of Christ over death was also highlighted by painting human skulls and bones under the cross –in the foreground of the painting. This is also a reference to the first man –Adam, who according to Christian tradition accounts, was allegedly buried deep under Golgotha, as well as to the original sin, which was redeemed thanks to the sacrifice of Christ.

On the wings of the triptych, one can see scenes from the Gospels – Christ’s Baptism, Ascension and Resurrection, as well as a contemporary scene of a child’s baptism. This was supposed to highlight the importance of the sacrament, which is one of the only two recognized by Lutherans.

The author of the altar piece – David Redtel – came to Pomerania from Torgau, the former capital of Saxony and one of the main centres of Lutheranism. He was a citizen of Szczecin and a court painter of Duke John Frederick, whose works feature both the influences of Cranach painting and the inspiration he drew from Dutch graphics.





Und wie Moses in der alten  
Schlange erhoher hat. Also mit der  
menliche Son erhoher werden. auff  
das alle die da molen die per  
wee werde. sondern das ewige leben  
haben

rect an seinem leide. auff dem holtz  
ben. der gerechtigkeit leben. durch  
welches wunden ihr leide weil word

INRI











## 2. Baptismal font

Saxon workshop (?), ca. 1580  
sandstone, remains of polychrome, 52 × 90 cm  
from the church in Nieborów near Pyrzyce  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/607

The hexagonal bowl of the baptismal font from the church in Nieborów in West Pomerania is decorated with reliefs depicting the four Evangelists, as well as Saint Peter and Saint Paul, presented against the background of rectangular panels covered with floral ornaments with astragal on the edges. The figures are shown in a semi-reclining position, wearing long, draped robes, each holding a book in their hand, accompanied by symbolic creatures – an angel (Saint Matthew), a lion (Saint Mark), an ox (Saint Luke) and an eagle (Saint John), as well as with their respective attributes – a key (Saint Peter) and a sword (Saint Paul). On the side edges there are volute crests with half-figures of boys. The lower part is covered with a flat ornament. A shallow circular depression in the bowl used to house a baptismal bowl made of metal. The base of the baptismal font has not survived to this day.

The images of the Evangelists and the Apostles Peter and Paul were a frequent element of the ideological depictions on the Protestant baptismal fonts. The Gospels, usually highlighted in these depictions, emphasise the importance of baptism as a sacrament instituted by Christ himself (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:16), as well as the role of the Gospels in the liturgy of the baptism.

The depictions of the saints standing in various poses, showing a variety of gestures, their stylised, expressive robes and the fact that figures transcended the borders of their panels are features of the Mannerist culture, with its emphasis on artistry and elaborate nature of the composition. The artist who created the bowl drew inspiration from Italian and Dutch models, while the quality of workmanship equals the sculptures created in the circle of the ducal court of the House of Griffin.





### 3. Epitaph with the scene of the Last Judgement

Pomeranian painter (Heinrich Redtel?, 1610 – after 1680)  
Pomeranian woodcarver's workshop, 1661  
oil, board, polychromed wood, gilding, 245 × 156 cm  
from the Church of St Gertrude in Szczecin  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1196

Epitaphs, which were installed inside churches, were used to commemorate the deceased and their families, while serving as the media for religious and moralistic messages.

In the epitaph of an unknown family from the Church of St Gertrude in Szczecin, the main image features an elaborate scene of the Last Judgment, painted based on a graphic by the Dutch artist Jan Sadeler (1550–1600). In the foreground, an angel takes the hand of a woman rising from her grave, pointing to the group of people taken to the heaven, which she is about to join. On the other side, devils drag sinners into the flames of hell. The upper part of the painting depicts Christ on a rainbow throne, assisted by Mary, angels and saints against the background of a luminous sky. This depiction, along with an inscription calling for the renunciation of sins, was presented as an exhortation, urging the believers to live in accordance with the teachings of Christ in the face of the inevitability of God's judgement.

The lower part of the epitaph depicts kneeling people – an elderly man with three sons to the left, with his wife and six daughters to the right. Next to her are four children in white robes, who passed away as infants. The founders are pictured against the background of an enormous building with an illuminated gate in the middle. This motif is a reference to Christ's words: 'I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved' (John 10:9) and symbolises the transition from mortal to eternal life.

The paintings and inscriptions are surrounded by an architectural frame featuring two marbled Corinthian columns and a striking woodcarving decoration with lobate-style motifs.







## 4. Allegory of Law and Grace

Pomeranian painter, 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (after 1567)  
tempera, board, 115 × 99 cm  
painting partially restored  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1330

The Allegory of Law and Grace is a depiction characteristic of Protestant iconography, in which scenes from the Old and New Testaments are juxtaposed on both sides. One side depicts the world of the strict Law, stemming from Moses' covenant with God. It is juxtaposed against the New Testament Grace – Salvation, offered to people by Christ. They are separated by a tree, which is dead and withered on the side of the Law, and lush and green on the side of Grace. The first images of this kind were created in the late 1520s. It was made in the 16<sup>th</sup> century in the studio of Lucas Cranach the Elder, a Saxon artist who was a friend of Martin Luther, the main founder of the Protestant doctrine.

The painting was based on a graphic created by Pieter Nagel from 1567, the composition of which referred to *Law and Grace* by Lucas Cranach the Elder from 1529. In the central part of the painting, we can see a naked man, covered with a scrap of fabric, facing a choice. The prophets Isaiah and John the Baptist show him two ways to salvation, based either on upholding the Mosaic law or on faith in Christ and his Grace. Isaiah, with Adam and Eve depicted behind him, Moses with the Ten Commandments and the scene with the copper serpent, points to a sarcophagus with a skeleton inside – a symbol of death as punishment for sins. However, he does not leave the man without hope, drawing attention to the copper serpent – a symbol of God's grace to converted sinners and a prefiguration of the crucified Christ. On the other side, John the Baptist points to resurrected Jesus coming triumphantly out of his tomb and trampling

down death and Satan. In the background, we can see Christ on the cross, the Paschal Lamb, and the scene of the Annunciation with the infant Jesus descending from the heavens towards Mary, holding a crucifix, which foreshadows his future sacrifice.









## 5. Communion flagon

Master JS, Szczecin, 1659

silver, partly gilded, height: 27 cm

from the Church of Sts Peter and Paul in Szczecin

inv. no.: MNS/Dep./99, owned by the National Museum in Warsaw

Communion under both kinds, which is given to all participants of the Lutheran mass, made it necessary to develop new types of liturgical vessels in the form of flagons for communion wine, from which it was poured into the chalice. The form of these vessels was reminiscent of secular jugs or tankards. According to the inscription, the communion flagon presented at the exhibition was sponsored in 1659 by merchant Samuel Blume and his wife Catharina Brunneman for the Church of Saints Peter and Paul in Szczecin.

The cylindrical body of the flagon supported by an arched foot, is covered by a domed, profiled lid with a handle in the form of an eagle with outstretched wings, which were broken off. The S-shaped handle was adorned with a shield at the bottom. The silver body is decorated with three engraved, gilded medallions with representations modelled on engravings by the popular 17<sup>th</sup>-century engraver and publisher Matthäus Merian (1593–1650). The scenes depicting the Last Supper, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ and the accompanying inscriptions refer to the main tenets of the Lutheran concept of the Redemption and to the dogma of the real and substantial presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist. The lid has a round plaque with a relief image of Christ as the Man of Sorrows with the crown of thorns and the instruments of passion. It faithfully repeats the composition of one of the medallions in the frame of the central piece of the silver altar, sponsored in 1636 by Duchess Elisabeth of Holstein and Duke Bogislaw XIV for the castle chapel in Dartowo.





## 6. Epitaph of Hans Wange

sculpture: Pomeranian workshop, early 16<sup>th</sup> century  
carved wood, polychrome, gilding  
epitaph: Pomeranian painter, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
tempera, board, 175 × 80 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/532

The central element of Hans Wange's epitaph is a late Gothic quatrefoil with a carved depiction of God the Father with the body of Christ taken down from the cross on his lap. A pair of angels standing to both sides of them hold a drapery, which serves as the backdrop for the Father and the Son, which gives the scene a particularly solemn character. The damaged upper part of the image originally featured a representation of the Holy Spirit as a dove.

The depiction of Our Lord's Pieta – *Pietas Domini* or *Pietas Patris* – was particularly popular in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>-century art, and illustrated the dogma of the Holy Trinity. In these depictions, God the Father presented the body of his deceased Son as a sign of peace with the human kind, as well as the redemption through the sacrifice of Christ.



The relief is a reused fragment of an earlier work from before the Reformation, probably an altar. The medieval quatrefoil has a modern frame with a simple architectural form. The epitaph is crowned with a triangular jerkin head with a frieze, filled with painted decoration with a house mark – a burghers' mark of family and ownership – in the middle.

The plinth part of the epitaph depicts a married couple kneeling before a crucifix. An inscription in capital letters below commemorates the names of the sponsors: Hans Wange (named a former officer) and his wife.





## 7. Portrait of Adam Rubach

Pomeranian painter, 1634  
oil, canvas, 110 × 86 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1164

The portrait depicts a man standing with his hand placed on his hip, against a background of golden drapery. He is dressed in a costume characteristic of the court fashion of the 1620s and 1630s. The tight-fitting doublet, as well as puffed-up trousers, which highlighted the hips, were made of black fabric with a textured floral pattern. The collar and cuffs are trimmed with delicate lace, as is the gold jewellery: the triple chain with a medallion, the belt and a rapier pendant, as well as the rings and signet ring on the left hand – all these elements confirm the high social standing and wealth of the portrayed individual.

The most exposed part of the costume is a gold medallion in an elaborate setting encrusted with diamonds, rubies and pearls, with a portrait of the Pomeranian duke – at the time, jewellery depicting rulers was considered a highly esteemed gift. Dukes and duchesses offered them to their friends amongst other rulers, family members, and people with special merits.

Thanks to the coat of arms, placed in the upper right part of the painting, with three trefoils on a background of blue and three spikes in a crest, as well as the initials A.R.D., we can recognise Adam Rubach (1586–1638), a doctor of medicine. He was a son of a Koszalin alderman Martin Rubach and Anna, from the Podewils family of Pomeranian knights. He was a court physician to the dukes Francis I and Bogislaw XIV, he was also a member of the chapter of St Mary's Foundation in Szczecin and a commissioner of the Ducal University. The exhibition also features is a portrait of his wife, Anna Maria, née Schultz.







ANNO 1571

## 8. Plate with the coats of arms of Jost von Dewitz and Otilie von Arnim

Master of plaques, Pomerania, 1538  
Gotland (?) limestone, polychrome, 72 × 128 cm  
from the castle in Dobra Nowogardzka  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/680

The relief depicts coats of arms of two great Pomeranian families united in 1530 by marriage of Jost (Jobst) von Dewitz (1491–1542) and Otilie von Arnim (1515–1576). The escutcheon of the von Dewitz coat of arms feature three golden cups against the field of red, the crest on the helmet depicts hands holding an identical cup. The coat of arms of the von Arnim family features two white (silver) bars against the field of red, with buffalo horns in the same colours in the crest. Both coats of arms are surrounded by red and silver mantling in the form of acanthus leaves. The crests of the coats of arms feature the date of the foundation of the plate: 1538. Above the coats of arms, a centrally placed plaque was installed with the names of the spouses in capital letters: IOST.VÅ.DEWICZE / DILIGE.VÅ.ARNIM.

Jost von Dewitz was an eminent, well-educated statesman, an advisor to Pomeranian dukes: George I, Barnim IX (XI), and Philip I. He had a great impact on the introduction of the Reformation in Pomerania, he also conducted diplomatic talks concerning the marriage of Duke Philip I and Maria of Saxony and joining the Pomeranian Duchy to the Schmalkaldic League in 1536.

The castle in Dobra had belonged to the von Dewitz family since the 14<sup>th</sup> century, at the time it was one of the biggest medieval residences belonging to knights in Pomerania. In the 1530s. Jost von Dewitz rebuilt it according to the tenets of the Renaissance style. The foundation plaque with the date of completion of works and the coats of arms of the owners was placed above the portal of the castle. Since the Thirty Years' War, the castle has been slowly turning into ruins. In 1808 it was finally abandoned and partly demolished. As a result of this, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the plate

was moved to the Dewitz manor in Mołdawin, from where it was donated to the museum collection.









## 9. Stove plate with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus

design: Philipp Soldan (1500 – after 1569),  
execution: Konrad Scharf, Haina, ca. mid-16<sup>th</sup> century  
cast: iron, 74.5 × 94 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Rz/2113

Cast iron plates have been popular since the late middle ages in stoves and fireplaces due to their characteristics, namely great heat retention. In many cases, they were adorned with reliefs depicting scenes from the Bible, coats of arms and moral parables.

The stove plate was cast by Konrad Scharf, based on the model created by sculptor Philipp Soldan in the Hessian ironworks at the monastery of Haina, which was secularised in 1527 by the Hessian landgraves. The plate depicts the parable of Lazarus and the rich man from the Gospel (Luke 16:19-31). The central scene, which takes place in a palace, shows a rich man during a lavish feast at a table, with musicians playing and servants bringing more dishes and pouring wine. In the foreground, in front of the palace, the emaciated Lazarus is shown with dogs licking his wounds, in line with the words of the Gospel. The poor man stretches his hand with an empty bowl in a pleading gesture towards a richly dressed man standing in front of the palace gate, but he chases him away with a cane.

The smaller scenes seen in the lower left-hand corner show Lazarus dying next to the palace wall, surrounded by angels, while the upper part shows the death of the rich man, whose soul is taken by the devil. The top scene to the right shows the soul of Lazarus – now as a child – sitting in Abraham's lap, and the bottom right-hand scene shows the soul of the rich man in the mouth of Leviathan, which represents hell.

The depiction of the Gospel parable, as well as the inscription stating that “the rich forget about the poor until they end up in hell” were to remind the faithful of their duties as Christians.



... aber einischer man der zucht er sich mit  
... im leinwand und lebet alle tag heitlich und in  
... er ein armer mit namen lotharis der lag für



... der kibel vergas bis er dort in der felle

... im sprach zu ihm sie haben mögen und die  
... igen boten. Er aber sprach dem Boten ab  
... er von dem toom zu dem toom



## 10. Plate with the Conversion of Saul

Hans Schenck-Scheusslich (ca. 1500 – ca. 1566) (?), ca. 1547 or 1555–1565  
sandstone, 58 × 83 cm  
from the Loitz townhouse in Szczecin  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/543

The relief depicts a scene taken from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 9:1–9), namely the conversion of Saul, former Pharisee and perpetrator of persecution against Christians. On his way to Damascus, where he was supposed to arrest the followers of Christ, he was blinded by a light so strong that he fell to the ground, and a voice from heaven asked: 'Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?'. This event changed his life – he became a devout Christian, took the name Paul and started preaching the faith in Christ.

The sculptor depicted the dramatic moment of the fall of Saul, who fell from his horse, blinded by the light of Christ. He is surrounded by other horsemen in Roman outfits, trying to support their companion and control the panicking horses. The lower part of the composition, with a crowd of tangled silhouettes of riders and horses, is contrasted with the smooth surface of the sky, against the background of which Christ, leaning out of the clouds, is shown pointing a spear in the direction of Saul. The scene of Saul's conversion was used in Protestant art as a symbol of redemption of humans by the Grace of God. Scholars also offered an alternative interpretation as a declaration of faith by the founders, connected with their conversion to Lutheranism.

The stone relief, associated with the work of Berlin sculptor and medalion-maker Hans Schenck, comes from the Loitz townhouse – the municipal palace of Szczecin bankers and merchants, built in 1539–1547. The Loitz family was highly prosperous, as they earned their riches by trading herrings and salt. They ran their businesses all over Europe, granting loans to many prominent borrowers, including Polish king Sigismund Augustus and the Elector of Brandenburg Joachim II. The family's aggressive financial policy, the death of both rulers and the subsequent refusal of their

successors to pay back the loans led to the bankruptcy of their bank in 1572, which had an enormous impact on the estates of many Pomeranian families, including the ruling House of Griffin.







## 11. Portrait of Johann Gebhard Rabener

Gdańsk-based painter from the circle of Andreas Stech (1653–1697) (?), 1680s  
oil, canvas stretched on a board, 104 × 82 cm  
Fragment of an epitaph from the cathedral in Kamień Pomorski  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1220

The portrait depicts a man in an elaborate, yet seemingly casual pose, wearing a draped coat made of fabric with golden patterns. Another impressive element of his outfit is a scarf loosely tied under his neck, made of Venetian lace with raised patterns – *Point de Venise*, which was particularly fashionable in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The long, dark hairs of his wig cascade in curls over his shoulders.

The man looks straight at the viewer. The soft modelling idealises the features of an older face – the wrinkles on the forehead and around the mouth are softened and blurred. In the dark background, we can see a piece of glittering drapery and the outline of a monumental column – both of these were used in Baroque painting to highlight the dignity of the portrayed individual. The character of the portrait refers to the model of the portrait of an aristocrat, developed by Antoon van Dyck, which had a great impact on European portrait painting, including the Gdańsk milieu, to which the painting is connected.

The oval portrait originally constituted a part of the epitaph of Johann Gebhard Rabener (1632–1701) in the Kamień Cathedral. Rabener, a lawyer by profession, was a judge at the Court of the Hohenzollern-family-owned part of the Duchy of Pomerania, as well as a court advisor to the Elector of Brandenburg in Berlin. He was also highly interested in science, with particular focus on astronomy. For many years, he exchanged letters with the famous Gdańsk astronomer Johannes Hevelius. In 1700, shortly before his death, he became a founding member of the Brandenburg Electoral Scientific Society, which later turned into the Prussian Academy of Sciences.



The epitaph in the Cathedral in Kamień Pomorski was probably put up in 1686, due to the death of Rabener's wife, Catharina. In addition to the portraits of the couple, the epitaph also featured three smaller portraits of their sons, two of which are preserved in the Szczecin museum's collection.







## 12. Saint John the Evangelist

Bernardo Cavallino (1616–1656), Naples, 1635–1640  
oil, canvas, 102 × 87 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1317

The painting depicts Saint John the Evangelist wearing an olive green tunic, which contrasts with the red of the shawl draped over his left arm. We can see him in a close-up, with his head tilted upwards. A beam of light brings out a fragment of his face and neck, as well as the back of his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing from the darkness. The young man looks up, in awe, with open lips, as if he was frozen in place due to the impact the heavenly vision had on him. With his left hand, he holds a leather-bound book lying on his lap and a flat bowl with a handle.

Saint John the Evangelist was often depicted during the revelation he had on the island of Patmos, where he was exiled by the Romans. The book almost certainly symbolises the parts of the Gospels, New Testament and the Book of Revelations he authored. The bowl, on the other hand, may refer to the legend, according to which he blessed the vessel with poison he was given, which rendered it harmless. This vessel is usually depicted as a chalice; however, this time the painter decided to present the Apostle with an antiquated bowl.

Sharp chiaroscuro contrasts create the sacral atmosphere of the painting, despite the glaring lack of supernatural elements. The light, the source of which was not depicted, makes a common-looking boy with a red nose seem like a chosen one who has just had an epiphany.

This way of portraying people – naturalistic and expressive at the same time, which took great advantage of contrasts between light and shadow,

was characteristic of painters creating in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by the works of Caravaggio. At the time, Naples was one of the most important centres for followers of Caravaggio in Italy. The author of the painting – Bernardo Cavallino, a very diverse artist who worked under the influence of Massimo Stanzione, Jusepe de Ribera and Artemisia Gentileschi, was also active in Naples.







## 13. Return of the Prodigal Son

Francesco Curradi (1570–1661), Florence, 1620s–1630s  
oil on canvas, 180 × 128 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1154

The painting depicts a scene from the Gospel – the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–32). In the foreground, we can see a young, half-naked man in tattered clothing, kneeling before an old man in a long velvet coat. The young man holds a shepherd's stick, which refers to his past, and holds his father's hand in the other one, putting his mouth next to it. The old man leans over his son and embraces him with an affectionate gesture. Looking at the scene is a young androgynous man, who holds a piece of golden fabric – presumably a servant with clothes for the sinner, according to the words of the Gospel: *But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; All the characters involved in the scene are serious and show restraint in their feelings. They are juxtaposed with the a small, black and white dog that cheerfully greets the returning son.*

The scene takes place against the dark wall of the house, in the shallow foreground space, which gives the viewer the impression of being a direct witness to the events depicted in the painting. The Baroque composition is based on heavy chiaroscuro contrasts. Thanks to warm light, the figure of the son stands out from the darkness, along with fragments of the other characters' faces and hands, focusing the viewer's attention primarily on the relationships between the depicted figures.

The parable of the prodigal son was one of the favourite themes in the Protestant and Catholic painting in the Baroque. The story was supposed to be moralistic in nature – it highlighted the need to repent and atone for sins, and the image of a forgiving father was a metaphor for God's mercy.







## 14. The Resurrection of Christ

Pomeranian painter, based on Jacopo Tintoretto (1518–1594), early 17<sup>th</sup> century  
tempera, oil, oak board, 99 × 75 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1329

The painting is a faithful reproduction of a piece by Jacopo Tintoretto, created in 1578–1581 as part of a series of canvasses from the Chapter Hall of the Scuola Grande di San Rocco in Venice. The work of the famous Venetian mannerist was copied many times, including by graphic artists. The model used to create many of the paintings produced throughout Europe was an engraving by the Dutch artist Aegidius Sadeler (ca. 1570–1629).

The composition created by Tintoretto is extremely dynamic, based on a diagonal layout, with expressive figures of angels struggling with a heavy stone, obstructing the entrance to the tomb. The figures of the sleeping soldiers are shown from above, in a short perspective characteristic of this artist.

In comparison with its monumental prototype, the painting by the Pomeranian artist is smaller in size and slightly elongated in proportions. The main differences from the original result from a different, less expressive painting technique, as well as a different treatment of colour and light. While Tintoretto's work is based on heavy chiaroscuro contrasts and has near monochromatic colour palette, the Pomeranian painter remained faithful to the tradition of evenly lit scenes and the juxtaposition of pure, contrasting patches of colour. The piece from the collection in Szczecin shows that the author did not manage to render the bold perspective shortcuts, especially when it comes to the figures of angels. Painted on a board, the painting probably served as a central element of an altar or an epitaph.







## 15. Epiphany

Pomeranian painter (Heinrich Redtel?, 1610 – after 1680)  
based on Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640), 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
oil, board, 151 × 113 cm  
from the Church of St Gertrude in Szczecin  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1156

The composition was modelled on an engraving by Antwerp-based graphic artist, Nicolaes Lauwers (1600–1655) created in ca. 1621, based on a painting by Peter Paul Rubens. The tribute scene takes place at night, lit only by the torches held by servants. The central part of the composition is occupied by the naked Infant Jesus, standing on a manger held by Mary. A grey-haired king in a coat trimmed with ermine fur kneels before him, kissing his foot affectionately. Kneeling beside him is a page in a golden robe holding a gift for Jesus – a vessel full of gold coins.

The main elements of the painting from the collection in Szczecin repeats the composition of the Flemish master. The differences can be seen in elements in the background. In the original depiction, a group of men crowding on the stairs, stopped with a shield by a soldier in Roman armour, watch the unusual event with interest. In the piece from the Church of St Gertrude, the painter replaced them with characters with personalised facial features, who instead of looking at the main protagonists, are turned straight towards the viewer. By doing so, the painter managed to include a group portrait of the sponsors of the painting, stylistically alluding to the Dutch models.



The painting is associated with the work of Szczecin painter Heinrich Redtel, who came from a well-known family of Pomeranian painters. Both his father Martin (1578–1616) and his grandfather David Redtel were artists associated with the Pomeranian ducal court. Heinrich was known as an author of religious works and portraits.





## 16. The Great Fair

David Vinckboons (1576 – ca. 1632), workshop, 1610  
tempera, oil, oak wood board, 120 × 168 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1161

The painting, which was modelled on a composition by David Vinckboons from 1602, depicts a fair taking place on the town's main square, in front of the town hall. In the painting, one can see a characteristic feature of Dutch art at the time – depiction of the landscape from a high perspective with numerous groups of figures, painted with great attention to detail. The colourful crowd features representatives of all social strata – from the elites and wealthy nobility in fashionable clothes, adorned with golden haberdashery and jewels, to poor people in simple linen shirts.

In the foreground, we can see people strolling around, dancing to the music played by a bagpipe player, and feasting in front of an inn. People watch the goods displayed by merchants in the stalls around the town hall and crowd in front of the open-air theatre stage, where a show is taking place. On the river, there are boat rides, and a shooting competition is taking place on the hill beyond the town's walls.

Genre scenes, which were particularly popular in Dutch painting, were used not only to depict everyday life and celebrations of holidays, but they were also a way to teach and promote certain morals, clearly visible to their intended audiences at the time. The scene of the fair, although joyful and carefree on the first glance, also points out some behaviours, which are not always appropriate. Near the inn, there is a brawl – people are fighting with their swords, stools, and a ladder, while some women unsuccessfully attempt to break the fight up. At the stalls, a man busy with his shopping does not see a thief, who is trying to get to his purse, and near the wall of the inn, a drunken man urinates in public. In this context, the central part of the composition, which features a herd of pigs, regarded as a symbol of impiety and sin, seems to be more relevant. The figure of the jester can also be read as a warning against recklessness and stupidity.















## 17. Widow's Offering

Dutch or Northern German painter, 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century  
oil, canvas glued on board, 89 × 126 cm  
inv. no.: MNS/Szt/1262

The painting depicts the story described in the Gospel of St Mark (Mark 12:41–44) and St Luke (Luke 21:1–4) – an offering made to the temple treasury by a poor widow. Jesus, who visited the temple of Jerusalem at the time and observed people putting in money as offerings, pointed out to the disciples: ‘Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on’ (Mark 12:43–44).

The scene is set in the imaginative interior of the Jerusalem Temple. The artist depicted it as a monumental basilica with Corinthian columns. Behind the lectern topped with a tympanum with the image of King Solomon, under the Tabernacle, one can see the chest of the Ark of the Covenant, and on it the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments and a menorah – a golden seven-branched candlestick.

On the right, in the side aisle, between columns, Jesus is shown entering the interior with the apostles. As he turns toward his disciples, he points to a treasury in the middle of the temple, and a woman in poor clothes reaches into her purse for coins. A similar gesture of reaching for a purse is made by a man in splendid robes trimmed with gold, shown in the foreground. The juxtaposition of these two figures is supposed to be moralising – by referring to the teaching of Christ and drawing attention to the meaning of true sacrifice.

Paintings with figural scenes placed in imaginary interiors, composed according to the principles of linear perspective, with the point of convergence shifted from the axis, gained popularity in northern Europe in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> and early 17<sup>th</sup> centuries thanks to the architectural patterns of Hans Vredeman de Vries (1527–1604).







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## **EXHIBITION**

### **Hidden Meanings. Art in Pomerania in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries**

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