

THE DILEMMA OF RELIGIOUS FOLK ART THE VIRGIN MARY SANCTUARY AT LICHEŃ, POLAND

(Em português p. 181)

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On the territory of Poland, a country with a very strong Roman Catholic tradition, there are over 700 Marian sanctuaries of various sizes [fig. 1]. Among such a large group of sanctuaries, one of them is of particular importance and position. It is Saint Mary's Sanctuary at Licheń Stary near Konin in Central Poland. The Lichen Sanctuary is a relatively new Marian cult sanctuary as it is only 140 years old. One of the main features, among others, which characterize this place, is its very dynamic development. Every year, the number of pilgrimages visiting Licheń grows dramatically. At the same time, every year brings newly built chapels, monuments and epitaphs. It is the art of Licheń which gives this place so unique a visage which is mainly responsible for the increasing number of coming pilgrimages. The art, we encounter, is by many critics regarded and defined as kitsch. What this paper proposes is to consider the phenomenon of Licheń art, discussing whether it can be categorized as such or whether it can be better defined as mass religious art.

Kitsch. This word, in Polish and many other languages, has a straightforward and negative connotation, despite the fact that it is not necessarily treated as such in the whole of anthropological literature. Let us first look at various definitions of kitsch and analyze whether, and if so to what extent, the art of the Licheń sanctuary can be defined in this category. Furthermore, Additionally, my intention is to analyze whether the art of Licheń is kitsch, and, if so, to what extent kitsch art of Licheń, assuming this is the case, is responsible for the dynamic development of the Virgin Mary's cult in this place and the sanctuary as a whole.

Theoreticians of art, while writing about kitsch, did not provide one clear definition of this kind of art. Various categories have been used for the description of kitsch referring to its peculiar, formal features and to the position of both its creator and the recipient. The difficulties with the definition of kitsch are nothing peculiar. The definition of art itself is a never ending task and historians of art are

far from any consensus in this matter (e. g. Tatarkiewicz 1975: 21-60). Werner Hoffman presented a very general definition of art according to which it is only "many-layered stipulated concept" depending on "the agreement between the creator and recipient" and on "a particular situation and context" (Hofmann 1976: 467). Art, as understood by Hoffman, is not only the fulfillment of particular artistic expectations or the creation of new expectations, but it is a tool enabling fulfillment of non-artistic human needs, especially political and religious ones. I would argue, that within this broad context, there is no room for a negative understanding of kitsch. When we assume that kitsch fulfills only the psychological needs of a man, it becomes a valuable art at the same time. Within this context, and that is what we encounter at the Saint Mary's Sanctuary in Licheń, it is an art of fulfillment because it realizes the expectations of pilgrims for an artistic, religious and political experience. Many contemporary commentators, very often, critically evaluate the art of their period, classifying it as a negatively understood form of kitsch. This is an art, which after some time, not necessarily after centuries, becomes one perceived and understood as great art, written by great A. It is worth bringing into mind here, the history of Gaudi's or that of the art nouveau movement. This trend was not, euphemistically speaking, favorably accepted by the critics of art of that period.

According to a panesthetic assumption, kitsch, as well as each material object, has an aesthetic value. Panesthetism rejects a continuum of values which has a zero value at some point. A zero value would have comprised aesthetically neutral objects having plus values on the right side of the scale and minus values on the left side of the same scale. Pawłowski, as one of the proponents of panesthetism, argues that kitsch cannot be comprehended by assuming a lack of aesthetic values (Pawłowski 1987: 178-180). Kitsch has an intrinsic aesthetic value of a particular kind, precisely speaking, it has many aesthetic values, despite its category, a particular situation and

aspect of life in which it manifests itself. At the same time, the Licheń art, even when defined as kitsch, brings new aesthetic values, which are not necessarily wrong, and its value can, thus, be correctly assessed only in particular situations. These situations depend on the biography of the recipients and their psycho-social dispositions. Those psycho-social human needs determine that kitsch is nothing wrong; it soothes the miseries and psychic sufferings of man, strengthening the human community. The Licheń art tries to satisfy those demands. It shows the world from various points of view, both evil and good. It touches the most sensitive chords of the human soul, and enables one to survive misfortunes due to the realization that others suffered equally strongly and were able to cope with their troubles and problems (picture. 1,2). No one can feel as being lost when there is the power of will in one's soul, which makes possible changes in human life. It is thus, that the Lichen art fulfills its role by forcing an individual to think about his/her own life, their problems and the future. Even when this art is kitsch and negatively perceived, it fulfills its role. And it is what is the most important in this scope.

We have to be aware, however, that not all authors perceive and define kitsch in such a positive way. A. Osęka has clearly argued that kitsch is a pathological phenomenon by combining overgrowth and handicap as a cancer on the body of art" (Osęka 1978:8). The similar opinion has been expressed by E. Broch who argued that kitsch was evil and an alien to a homogenous system of art (Broch 1955:306-307). However, one cannot live without kitsch because it is an art created for ordinary men as opposed to "great art" which very often exceeded their perception. Kitsch easily may be easily accepted by anyone simple because it dwells inside each of us. Although, this statement may upset some, it is shared by numerous critics (e. g. Banach 1968:15-17; Beylin 1966:144; Jackowski 1966:172; Moles 1978:14,31-35; Osęka 1978:6). Jackowski argues that, normally, one can grow out of kitsch in the same way as one can grow out of their child's toys or clothes (Jackowski 1966:172). However, adults sometimes have a desire to play with their child's railway set or other toys, similarly they express a certain need for kitsch. This may be caused by the fact that adults treat this play as something that can cause a return of emotions from their childhood and remind us of the care-free days

of child's play. I would argue that the perception of the Marian Sanctuary in Licheń is governed by similar rules. Due to its diversity, Licheń reverts to the time of colorful church fairs which were often very important attractions for children and reminded in their memory as something extraordinary, wonderful and fabulous. This was a kind of substitute for paradise. The Licheń sanctuary becomes a sentimental return to the bygone years of joyful childhood (picture 3, 4, 5). This sentimentality, embodied in elements of kitsch, seems to be the driving force behind the dynamic development of Licheń art. When we accept that kitsch is inside of each of us, then we can expect that the contents of kitsch art are easily comprehended and approved.

The theoreticians of art often link kitsch with the art of ostentatious consumption. In this context, the world becomes clearly subordinated to a production which is abundant and sublime at the same time (Banach 1968:105, 295; Broch 1955:295; Duvignaud 1970:81-83; Hofmann 1976:457; Jackowski 1966:170; Juszczak 1966:158; Moles 1978:20-30). This production can be directed toward God (as it is in Licheń), or towards other people. Duvignaud argues that participation in this exchange is praiseworthy (Duvignaud 1978:81-83). A very clear exchange between gifts and mercy takes place here. This specific trade includes God and it should be strongly stressed, that in the Licheń Sanctuary, this exchange is especially strong. This trade is characterized by various forms and comprises not only a widespread collection during services or prayers for the souls of the dead but it manifests itself in an active perception of the art of the sanctuary. An interesting group of sculptures can serve as an example here. It presents the Last Judgment on the soul of the sinner (picture 6). This group consists of three figures: God The Father sitting on his throne, the Archangel Gabriel with a sword and scales for the souls in his hands and a penitent soul on bended knees who has sack full of sins on his back and hat in his hand humbly taken off before God. It is this hat in which the pilgrims leave money in order to placate the irritated God. Here is a very clear example of straightforward exchange: money - mercy.

Consumption, according to Moles, manifests itself also in the fact, that the produced artifact is provisional all the time (Moles 1978:26). Because of

its provisional character, it becomes condemned itself to a faster death and faster exchange. This kind of temporality and transitory character are especially characteristic features of the Licheń Sanctuary. Even ordinary pilgrims can easily observe constant desire for change and improvement in almost all the objects. During my few years of studies in Licheń, this place was almost completely changed a few times and this was not exclusively due to the construction of new chapels and the purchase of new areas, but also thanks to the rebuilding of old epitaphs and other objects into new and more perfect ones. Let us consider here, the Monument of the November Insurgents, the Chapel of Maximilian Maria Kolbe, the coronation altar in the interior of the Chapel of Holy Virgin from Vilnius. Father Makulski plans further improvement and rebuilding of existing chapels (Makulski personal communication 1994). His intention is also to change the Golgotha sculptures into “more elegant” ones. Here, it should be stressed, that this constant change is responsible for the fact that the Licheń Sanctuary is positively perceived by visiting guests and pilgrims. It is these permanent modifications which make this place so alluring to the ordinary observer.

In the consumption model of art, the art itself becomes a commodity and becomes dependent on the market. Licheń grows because as a commodity, it is accepted and sold. Guests and pilgrims are those who buy this “product”. They are responsible, to large extent, for the creation and propagation not only of the cult itself but also everything which is closely related with it, including the art. They very often suggest what should be built in the Sanctuary and leave the necessary funds to have these projects realized. The money they leave are not an alms or gifts anymore. They become legal tender for the commodity which was “consumed”. This money is further used for the production of new products such as subsequent chapels, epitaphs, pictures, sculptures, etc. Some of the pilgrims are aware of the importance of the money they leave in the Sanctuary. One of the pilgrims expressed this in the following way: “I visit Licheń to see how my money was invested, and when I like the objects which are built I give my money again and again. I will come in the future to see how my funds were used”. In this way, when more people accept, buy and pay for the “product”, there is more money for further

investment and the owners of the sanctuary are forced to build new objects all the time to have a potential donor satisfied during their next visit to Licheń. As a result, the Virgin Mary’s Sanctuary in Licheń can be seen as being created by the demand of groups of pilgrimages, guests and visitors.

While discussing the relation between kitsch and consumption, it is necessary to look at the attitude of the artist himself. Juszcak stresses that the creator of kitsch looks to the simplest solutions, he is mainly interested in how, in the most effective and fastest way, to get to the recipient (Juszcak 1966:158). His art pays compliments to the omnipotent consumer – in the case of Licheń, to the pilgrim. He looks for such forms of art and their contents whose attraction will affect arrival of new groups of pilgrims. They have to find in Licheń, these subjects which are forgotten and not considered in other places and those which are fashionable, sentimental, and tragic (picture 7). All of these activities are directed towards one aim – to pull in the maximal number of pilgrims. The Licheń Sanctuary has to surpass, something that is clearly stressed by pilgrims, the attractiveness of other Polish Marian sanctuaries, particularly that of Częstochowa, which is perceived by them as an artificial, historical entity. It is regarded by them as such because any changes in Częstochowa are seemingly impossible to make. Because of the Sanctuary’s few hundred years of history it has been consecrated and glorified too much. The Częstochowa Sanctuary is too holy, and due to this, not realistic. Everything in Licheń, quite contrary, is devoted to ordinary people. As such, it is not necessary to be acquainted with Polish history in order to be able to decipher all the contents which it brings. Everything is very clear and understandable.

Finally, we have to consider the conditions which support the development of kitsch at particular moments of history. The specialists’ opinions differ here, as well. Let us look at some of these propositions, having in mind the peculiarity of the Licheń Sanctuary. Jadwiga Jarnuszkiewiczowa argues that kitsch is a product of groups which do not possess their own cultural traditions and therefore adopt some stereotypes from other cultural traditions (Jarnuszkiewiczowa 1966:154). However, it is difficult to suspect Licheń pilgrimages to be without any traditions. It is widely known that

the Polish village, represented by majority of Lichen pilgrims, is a bearer of strong, firm and living tradition. Consequently, the opinion that kitsch is caused by the decline of values and traditions seems to be very simplified. This anchor tends toward the opposite, more accurate opinions of expressed by J. Burszta, K. Piątkowski and M. Czerwinski who link the phenomenon of kitsch with diverse and heterogeneous cultures (Burszta, Piątkowski 1994:118; Czerwiński 1966:150-151). Furthermore, they claim that kitsch emerges and exists in societies characterized by loyal schemata of the past and tradition. It exists according to the rules of a stereotype. "Tradition comes down from some canon of beauty: kitsch simply trusts those canonized beauties which exist and it is proved" (Burszta, Piątkowski 1994:118). Thus, kitsch is nothing new; it is not a revolutionary art which transforms universally existing opinions on art and changes the way of its perception and assessment. It is an art which can be understood by an ordinary recipient. Furthermore, it is an art which does not destroy existing systems of values but, to the contrary, it consolidates them. W. Hoffman has, in a very brutal way, called banality, "it is boredom", he continues, "which does not bring anything interesting into the textbook of art" (Hofmann 1976:477). And this is precisely what is happening in Lichen. This art, by definition, must be banal and simple (picture 8). This is art, by transmitting, traditionalism and ordinariness, enables pilgrimages coming to Licheń to feast upon its painting, sculpture and architecture. Furthermore, it enables them to rest and forget about everyday troubles. By fulfilling this canon, this art becomes the title from Moles's work "the art of luck."

The above described relations existing between the recipient and art are easily comprehended in the Licheń Sanctuary. The pilgrimages coming to Licheń are usually subjected to the pressure of much news and information, very often contradictory, coming from the mass media. They are also subjected, by necessity, to live in gloomy blocks and neglected households. Licheń gives them much more than it is possible to get at any other place. They come to the Sanctuary though to a completely different world in which everything is clear and understandable. The art is easy to comprehend; it does not come in sophisticated and complicated forms; its content is convincing. Additionally, a very

important role is fulfilled by the environment, a clear, colorful gardens, leveling a noise and turmoil of life found outside Sanctuary (picture 9). It is obvious that in this place one cannot forget the most important issue, the pilgrim's conviction of the protective will of Saint Mary from Licheń who takes care of those coming here who are exhausted by everyday troubles. All the above analyzed elements, arranged in one whole, as a suggest and reveal the causes of dynamic development of the Licheń sanctuary.

Having an understanding of kitsch after having discussed and analyzed, let us consider its morphological features so as to be able to see whether the theory of kitsch can be deciphered in Licheń art. The kitsch object of art is usually characterized by certain formal characteristics of the object as: color, shape, facture treatment and kind of material used. Generally, it is believed that kitsch can be recognized by use of curved lines, the lack of a sober background, a saturation of color, and the material and dimension of the object itself (Moles 1978:2). To be able to comprehend the peculiarity of Licheń art we have to carefully examine those elements in art of the Sanctuary.

A. Moles argues that curved lines, which define contour and particular elements, are the first characteristic feature of kitsch. These lines freely meander over the surface of the painting, having many points of mutual crossing but very few point of attachment (Moles 1976:58-63). While analyzing Lichen art, we observe that curved lines are a very interesting feature (picture 10,11). They can be found, e. g., in the background of the Golgotha chapels. They create wave, sand colorful surfaces thank to which the interior of the chapels becomes place vibrated of the surface. Restless, wave lines are characteristic of the Golgotha scene as a whole. During the construction of this monument, all straight lines were avoided, even vaults are oval and walls lack any sharp angles. This restless movement of lines is additionally underlined by the fracture treatment of stones from which the Golgotha was built. These stones, due to their natural shape, introduce a feeling of anxiety in the general architectural outline of this monument.

Another characteristic feature of kitsch is the rule of accumulation and decorative value. These rules manifest themselves in the avoidance of big,

even spaces which remain undisturbed by anything. Their surfaces are fulfilled and enriched by representations, symbols and ornaments. The ornaments are excessively developed and determine the imperative rule of creative activity. They needn't necessarily have a vegetative character, to the contrary they often have a figurative one. These two kinds of ornaments perfectly co-exist in Lichen art. The figurative representations are mixed with the vegetal ones and are reciprocally complemented through their allegorization (picture 12). The best example is the chapel of Father Honorat Koźminski. Father Koźminski was famous as a founder of a dozen convents throughout Poland. Consequently, his missionary activity was presented in the chapel in the form of exuberantly layered and boldly shaped grape-vines. In the center of the wall is a bust of blessed Honorat who manifests trunk of fruitful grape-vine in this representation. Creeping branches, loaded with bunches of grapes, are disperse from him. There are various kinds of such ornaments in this chapel. Among them, the most developed and, at the same time, strongly allegorical is the vegetal-ornament.

Of not inconsiderable importance in kitsch representations is color. For this kind of art, the most characteristic are complex colors which are constructed by contrast between clear and supplementing ones. There are many tones of the white here and symptomatic is transition from red to 'candy hued' rich pink, violet, lily-white and a grab-bag collection of all mixed colors. Licheń art uses these colors with assimilation (picture 13). Consider, for example, the Chapel of the Unborn or the Chapel of the Betrayal. The dominant colors here are pinks coexisting with red and white. The Chapel of the Resurrection is decorated in all colors of the rainbow and The Cave of the Revelation from Golgotha has exactly those candy hued colors. The same can be seen in numerous pictures. The pictures painted by J. Molga have sweet tones with a supersaturated intensity of colors. Here, one can find here all the colors of the rainbow.

Another characteristic feature of kitsch objects, as defined by Moles, should be discussed in some details. He argues, and this opinion is shared by many theoreticians of kitsch, that materials from which the object of art is produced, "exists in disguise", it pretends that it is something else than in

reality (Czerwiński 1966:150; Jackowski 1966:170; Moles 1978:63; Pawłowski 1987:187}. This feature is regarded as something which constitutes the kitsch object and is one of the most important criteria enabling us to identify such an object as kitsch. It is perceived, that the object in which this feature is recognized, loses its value and importance. However, it has to be clearly stressed that such a perception was not widely shared in the past. On the contrary, in an idealistic system of art, which was dominant from the baroque until the end of the nineteenth century, the material substance is the means of visualization of presenting ideas and it is only these ideas are of crucial importance (picture 14,15). Under this canon, all shiny and light transmitting materials are closer to ideal perfection and divine origin than materials which are non-translucent. These former seem to look as more non material and glitter (which is clearly stressed by G. Bandmann) and it is believed to reflect divinity (Bandmann 1976:50). According to this system, gold paint is regarded as more valuable than real gold, the artificial flower as more valuable than the natural one. It is because the latter departs from pre-patterns and is doomed to faster extinction. As regards to artificial flowers, this opinion was changed only as late as the year 1900. From this year onwards, the artificial materials in art are perceived and treated in a decidedly negative way. In the system of art discussed here, concealment of material, in order to imitate materials regarded as standing higher in the hierarchy of art, was a common practice and tendency. It was realized mainly by modifications of the materials surface: copper or silver were used for gilding, the church walls made of chipped stone, were covered by concrete and then painted to give the impression of being made from chopped stone. In brick-built buildings wooden moulds were used very often, later covered by paint with a sand admixture in order to give the appearance of stone. The same can be said with regard to wooden and stone sculptures which were painted in such a way that the material from which they were made was completely invisible, furthermore they were very often marbled.

The objective of numerous "imitations" was, according to Bandmann, not fraud but "transferring that which is natural into something which is idealistic" (Bandmann 1976:52). The material, in an idealistic system, was not perceived because of its

sensual and material properties. Of crucial importance were its plastic and metaphoric properties. Bronze was linked with durability, gold with glitter, ivory with spotlessness, stone with consistency and glass with transparency and brightness. When we want to look at the Licheń art from the perspective of the idealistic theory of art, we cannot perceive the material from which Sanctuary was built as something worse and inferior. We have to focus our attention on the ideas brought by particular materials and, as a result, we can decipher the meaningfulness of the Licheń art.

It must, however, be clearly stressed that the idealistic system ceased its existence by the end of the last century. It was replaced by a materialistic system in which considerable attention is focused on the material from which the object is created, and which can be nothing less than what is in reality. From this perspective, Licheń art becomes fraud, because the material used has incomplete value. However, I should be stressed that the return to the assumptions of an idealistic system gave us unexpectedly positive effects in the perception and understanding of Lichen art.

When we accept the opinion of numerous theoreticians of art that the characteristic feature of kitsch art are materials, which rarely represent what they really are, we can look at Licheń art from a different perspective. From that point of view, the representative art of the Sanctuary is situated within the limits of kitsch art. We conclude very often that the material used in the creation of art objects is very rarely what it is in reality. Concrete imitates marble, bronze or sandstone, glass imitates natural plants. We can multiply these examples.

Another important feature of kitsch is divergence between the real size and size represented which has either a form of gigantism or reduction. These kinds of representations are numerous in the Licheń Sanctuary. The best example of this kind of work is a scene of revelation of the Virgin to Sikacz (the Licheń visionary from the middle of 19 century). This group is located near the grave of the visionary himself and it was created by R. Bartoszevska (picture 16). The figures of the shepherd Mikołaj Sikacz and the Blessed Virgin are considerably bigger and dominate above the pilgrims gathering at their feet. In other sculptures, these deviations are not so considerable, however

they are easy to notice. Here, magnification is almost exclusively secondary to reduction. The observable disproportion of represented figures is the result of creative helplessness rather than intentional activity.

Let us now analyze the rules governing kitsch, and try to figure out whether here also there is a consistence between the theoretical constructs and the reality of Licheń art. According to Moles, there are five rules governing kitsch: a lack of adaptation, cumulating, synesthesia of perception, mediocrity and comfort (Moles 1978:63). The rule of a lack of adaptation means that in every object there are some kinds of deviation, a constant deviation from nominal assignment. This is clearly represented in the Licheń sanctuary. It is difficult to clearly comprehend what the function of a given sculpture or other object of art is. There is no clear indication whether it is a religious, aesthetic, patriotic or moralizing function. Additionally, the aim, which the object supposedly fulfills, is not univocally specified.

The rule of cumulating is defined by Moles as "something more" (Moles 1978:76-80). It is assumed that in a given object there is an overlapping of religion and hedonism, eroticism and the exotic. Everything exists in great abundance, everything exists next to everything else. One can find exactly the same in the Licheń Sanctuary. Various biblical and religious plots are intertwined together to describe or comment on the history of Poland, trying to renew the morale of the society and to create Licheń as a place of rest and contemplation. As a result, everything exists, everything properly coexists, everything intends to create colorful, mosaics which attract pilgrims to this place. Apart from the rich contents, one should consider other important elements of the Licheń Sanctuary. However, the content is of great importance, it is not responsible for the cohesion of the object of art. Extremely important for the cumulating effect are decorative forms which exist there. The cumulating is built up by various kinds of art objects, their style and the technique by which they were made; this is all supplemented by the color green which is all around, by the lake on which the sanctuary was founded and also the carillons sounding from the church tower, the church clocks, and the bugle-call played during the opening of the holy picture. All of this creates a rich

and diverse phonosphere. All these elements play a significant role in striking with wonder and attracting pilgrims and in making this place so popular.

The next rule is closely related to the cumulation. The core of synesthesia of perception is to attack all the senses. The art has to be total, affecting all the senses. Consequently, for the creation of a representational art in the Licheń Sanctuary, the following elements were used: firm, strong colors (sense of the sight), carillons and bugle-calls (the sense of hearing) and blooming trees, flower-beds and the scent of incense (the sense of smell). While visiting the Sanctuary, the pilgrims touch sculptures and pictures, looking for additional emotional experience through the next sense. The sense of taste has not been forgotten either, a canteen exists in which one can find nourishment. This results in a situation where all the senses take part in comprehending the Sanctuary of Saint Mary in Licheń.

Kitsch and the representational art of Licheń is a unique phenomenon, it contradicts avant-garde art, and has become mass art. Its mediocrity manifests itself both in a lack of moderation and preservation of bounds. The turgidity transforms to triteness and triteness becomes revealing. Everything is subordinated to the pilgrim, his requirements, expectations and needs. At the same time, everything has one objective only – the common acceptance.

However, it has to be clear that the above presented analysis refers exclusively to the objects. It has not taken into consideration the person creating a given object of art. One has to consider whether the objective of E. Makulski, the creator of Licheń sanctuary, was to create a kitsch place of cult or that the final result, as analyzed above, was something which emerged in spontaneous way. The analysis of these issues is even more difficult when one realizes that the Christian issues in art have been repeated over and over again throughout the ages and were duplicated many times. Accordingly, the repetitions have weakened the real creative power of the art. Due to some kind of team-work, the issues discussed were vulgarized. The creation of religious art on a high level is not an easy task, however, it is possible to realize. If the representational art of the Licheń Sanctuary is kitsch, this is undoubtedly

unintentional, although one cannot exclude some kind of purposefulness. One has to enumerate here pathetic scenes (kitsch from its assumptions is directed toward creation of an amateurish experience), the desire to get wealth (the Licheń Sanctuary is getting bigger all the time, and therefore it needs new funds to have new investments realized), the desire to gain popularity (more sanctuary is popular, more people are coming there and, as a result, the development of this place becomes easier). Additionally, the desire to gain popularity is not alien to Father E. Makulski who signs the majority of epitaphs of the Sanctuary and in each book on Licheń there are at least a few pictures of him. However, one has to remember that not all objects which lack aesthetic value can be regarded as kitsch. The same can be said with regard to the function fulfilled by the object of art. It is assumed from the outset, that when the object has an educational function, it cannot be directly and univocally linked with kitsch, because all methods are justified in order to present new ideas and values. From this perspective, the art objects from the Licheń sanctuary are not necessarily kitsch because, according to the intention of their creators, their main objective is to teach people how to live in the complicated and complex world of contemporary values.

I do not want to give one and unequivocal opinion whether the representational art from the sanctuary of Saint Mary in Licheń is kitsch or whether it cannot be defined by this category. It must be stressed that uneducated people have not clear criteria in distinguishing bad art from good one. They evaluate the value of a given object of art according to different criteria than aesthetic ones. They react not for this what is univocally good or bad from artistic point of view but they notice elements which cheer their lives up or destructively influenced the pace of their life. These recipients are ready to accept artistically valuable art objects only when they soothe their anxiety and improve feeling of safety. Therefore, it seems to be unjustifiable to condemn univocally the art of the Lichen sanctuary, simply because it perfectly fulfills the objectives, which were given to them by creators of this cult place. Licheń art helps people to overcome difficult life problems, show the way one has to follow, or stigmatize evil. Therefore, one cannot regard Licheń art as a bad one. The social roles, it fulfill, are much

more important than negative aesthetic feelings being noticed by more educated part of the society.

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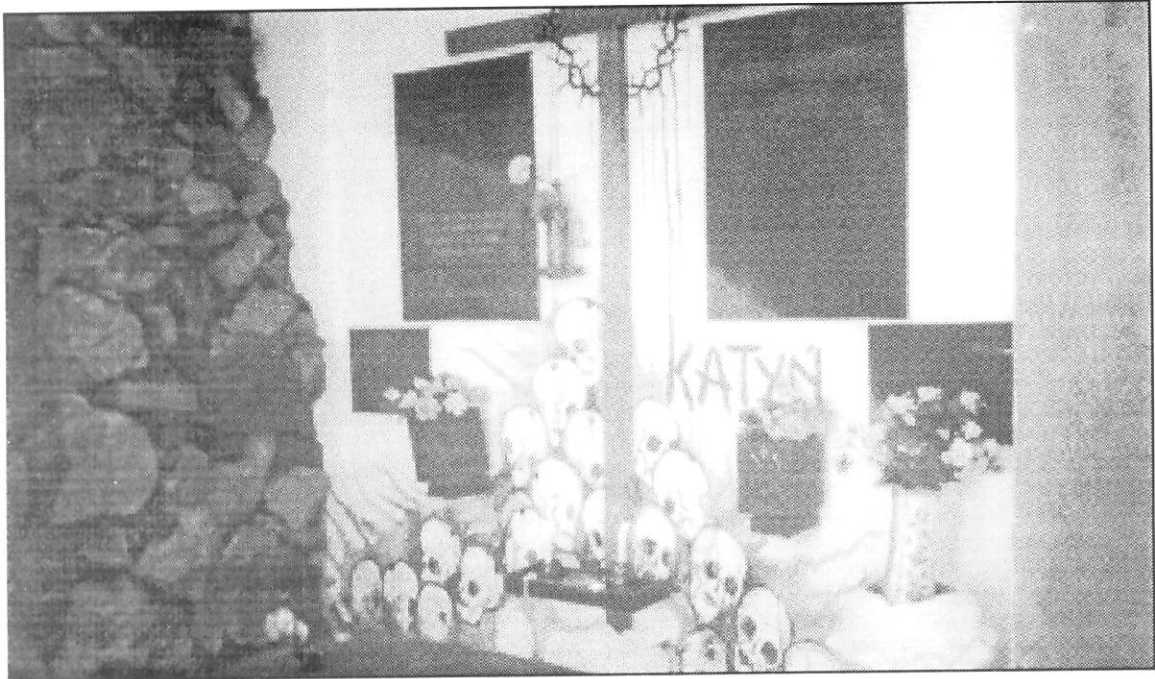


Fig. 1.



Fig. 2.

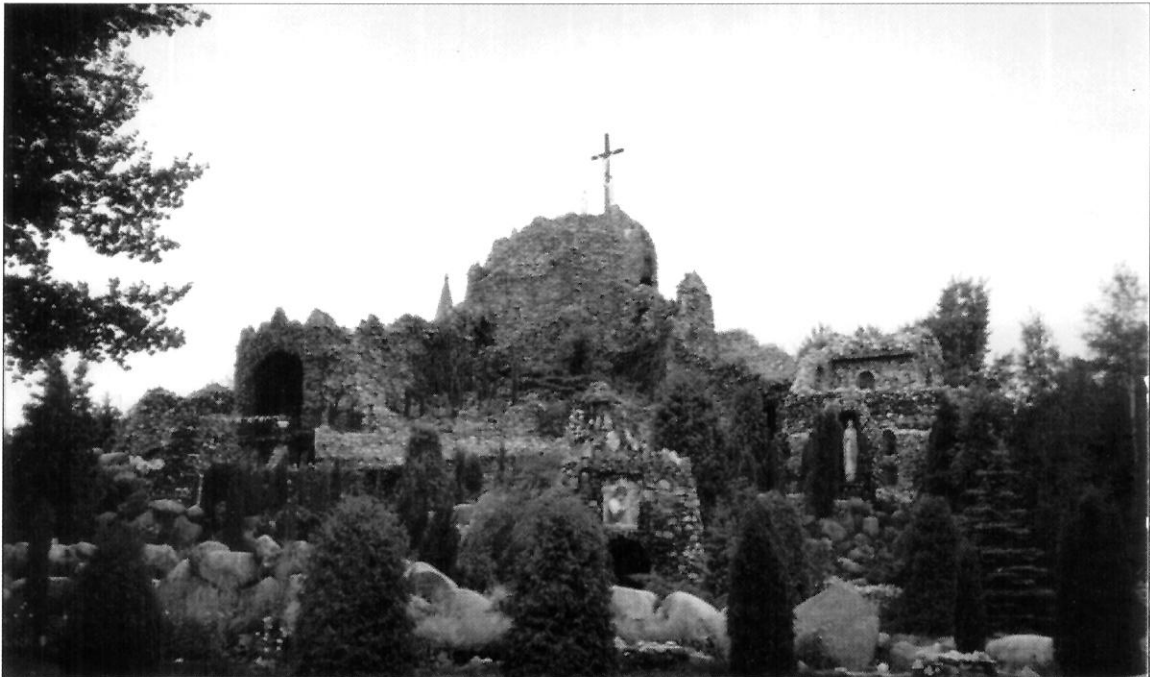


Fig. 3.

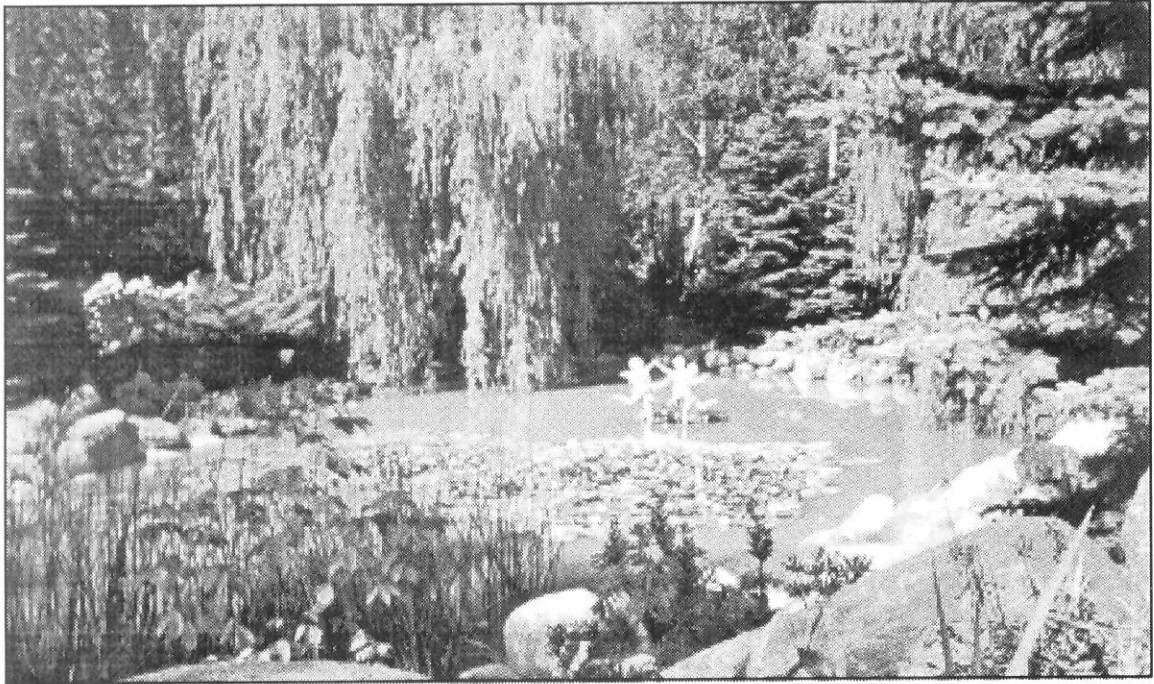


Fig. 4.



Fig. 5.

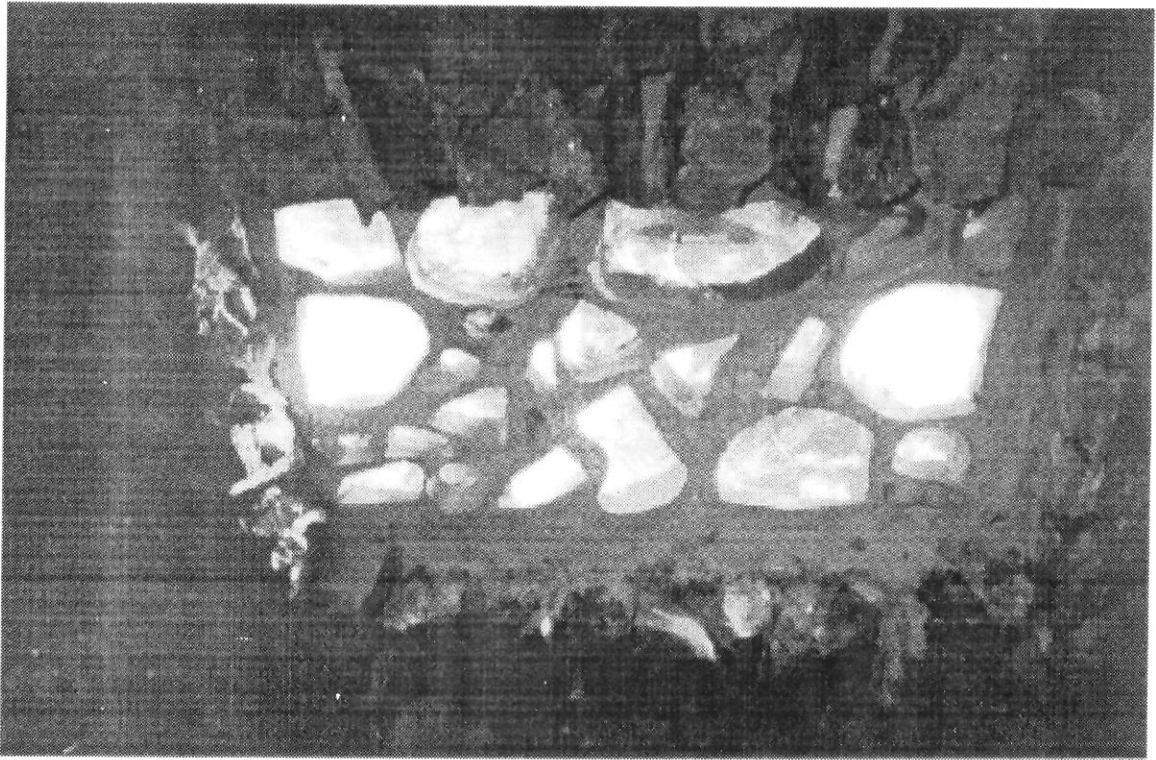


Fig. 11.



Fig. 12.

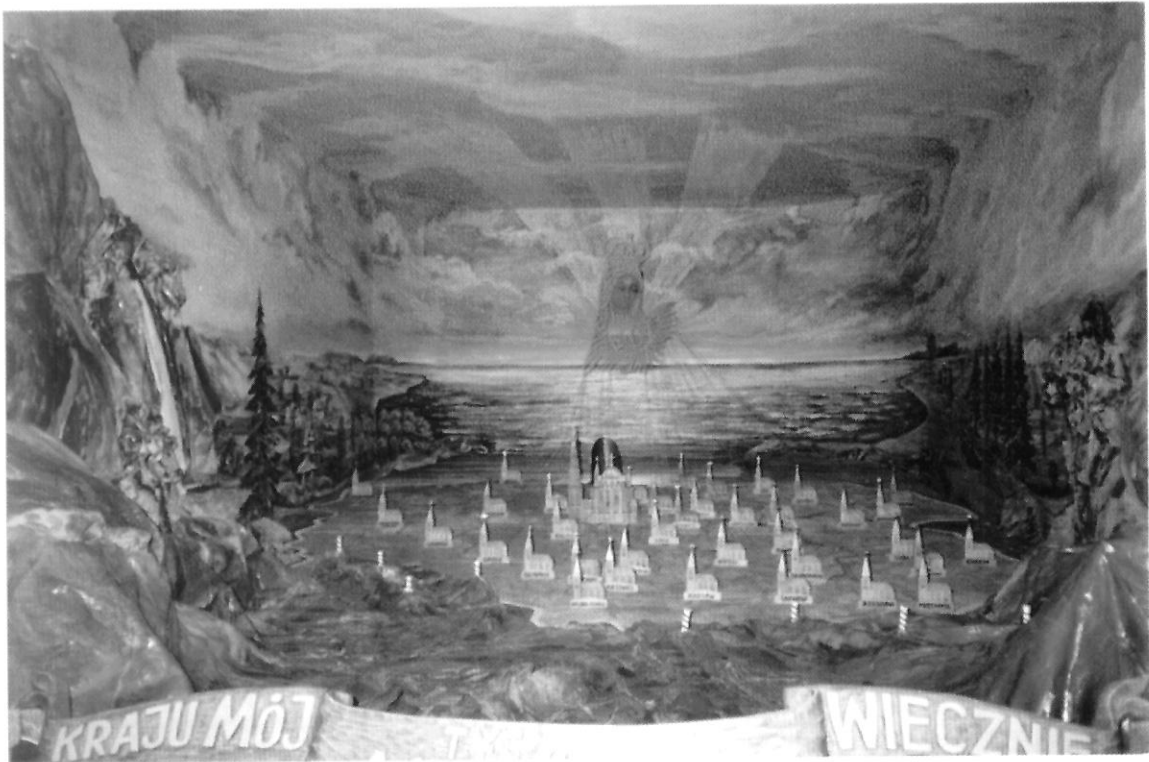


Fig. 13.



Fig. 14.



Fig. 16.

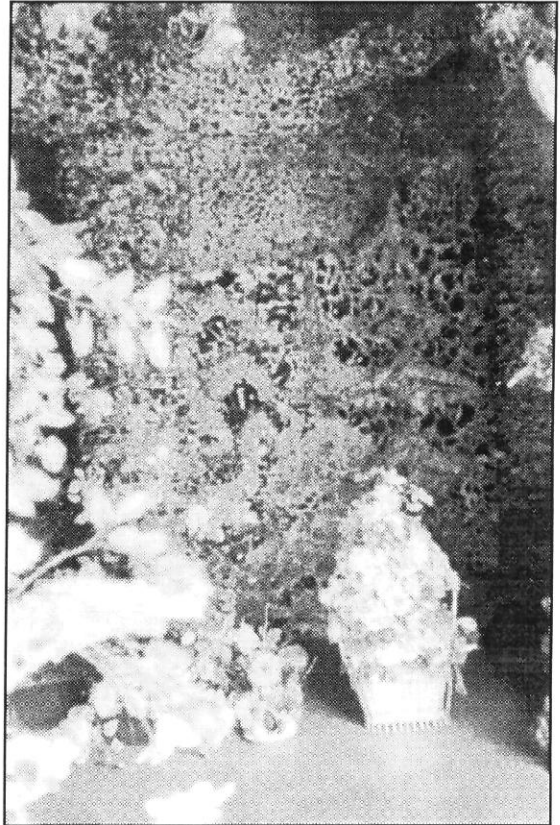


Fig. 15.