

ASSESSING THE STATE OF CONSERVATION FOR STAINED GLASS WINDOWS IN TRANSILVANIA

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Abstract. The study refers to an analysis of the preservation state and measurements of protection of the stained glass windows commissioned between the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. I will use examples of good and bad restoration practices related to the latest recommendations of Corpus Vitrearum Medium Aevii International. In the study, I also included stained glass windows installed in the same period, that do not belong to historical monuments, either because those are not classified or because they no longer exist. The final conclusion will emphasize the importance of the study of stained glass windows as artistic elements, but mainly the need to inventory the works that still exist.

Rezumat. Studiul se referă la o analiză a vitraliilor puse în operă între finalul secolului XIX și prima jumătate a secolului XX a modului de conservare și protecție. Vom folosi exemple de bune și rele practici în restaurare raportate la ultimele recomandări ale Corpus Vitrearum Medium Aevii International. De asemenea, în cadrul studiului, am inclus și vitralii montate în perioada la care ne referim care nu aparțin unor monumente istorice fie din cauză că acestea nu sunt clasate, fie că nu mai există. Concluziile finale vor sublinia importanța studiului acestui element artistic dar în principal necesitatea inventarierii lucrărilor care încă mai există.

Stained glass is a plain, two-dimensional artistic component, made up of pieces of glass, colored or colourless, assembled and stiffened in a metal network, made of lead or tin,¹ which, installed in the natural lighting openings of buildings, by filtering the light, ensures the desired color temperature of the interior. I have taken up this definition to emphasize the characteristics followed when evaluating the state of conservation of a *stained glass* window with reference to situations encountered on research. I will highlight the degree of dirt deposits, rigidity, flatness, detachment from the network, integrity, and protection of the *stained glass*.

This study assesses the conservation state of the *stained glass* windows, is based on observations over 23 monuments, hosts of 199 *stained glass* windows.² Although this is not an exhaustive research of Transylvanian *stained glass* windows, we attempt to document the *in situ* reality and offer foundations for further research.

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¹ Whall 1914, p. 19.

² Appendix 1

The state of clarity of a *stained glass* window is the easiest to observe and, in most situations, it can be established solely through optical analysis. A defective state, which can be identified optically, leads, in the short term, to a transition from aesthetic to unaesthetic of the effect intended to be obtained by making the *stained glass* (Fig.1). In the long term, however, deposits of dust, condensation or products from candle smoke can cause major defects. The elements that make up the deposition substance, under conditions of exposure to light, humidity and temperature variations, can produce chemical reactions on the surface of the glass that form very adherent crusts and pitting.³

Numerous *stained glass* windows found in Transilvania are affected to varying degrees by this defect. I identified them in high, hard-to-reach places, which means that the cleaning can only be possible in specialized workshops during restoration. At the opposite, in very good condition, as relevant examples are the *stained glass* windows of the Roman Catholic Church of the Holy Trinity in Sibiu, from the evangelical church of Saint Mary of Sibiu or Saint Michael in Cluj-Napoca, which benefited from extensive restoration and preservation processes in the recent past. Most of the monuments, however, especially those placed



Fig. 1. Stained glass with deposits. Brasov Neolog Synagogue. (Photo by Cristian Florin Anghelescu)

³ Davison, 2003, p. 190-191.