

# RESTORATION PROJECT OF THE MURAL PAINTINGS OF THE DRAGOMIRNA MONASTERY CHURCH

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**Abstract:** The main Church of the Dragomirna Monastery has its nave and altar decorated mural paintings which date back to as early as the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. These were created in the *affresco* technique, with areas completed in *mezzo fresco*, and extensive gilded surfaces.

There is a wide diversity of stone-carved elements– flowers, ribs, torsade embossing, sculpted and painted shields, which cannot be found in any previous mediaeval churches in Moldavia. These elements complete the iconographic programme of the painting, which spans over 22 registers, differentiating and defining the uniqueness of Dragomirna. A series of degradations due to infiltration, which occurred over time in the upper part of the nave and the base of the bell tower, led to the architectural restoration of the Church in the '60s.

The mural painting is first restored 400 years after its creation. The complex works were possible through the implementation of a project funded by the European Union between November 10th 2010 and February 15<sup>th</sup> 2012. The ample restoration and conservation process of the 900 square meters of mural painting highlighted its amazing original appearance and its artistic elements influenced by the techniques and chromatics of miniature painting. The interventions have been carried out in accordance with the international standards of conservation and involved a team of 50 specialists. The project '*Dragomirna Church's 17<sup>th</sup> Century Frescoes, Suceava, ROMÂNIA*' has been among the winners of the 2014 EU Prize for Cultural Heritage / Europa Nostra Awards in the 'Conservation' category. The project has received the Grand Prix and the Public Choice Award.

**Rezumat:** Biserica mare a mănăstirii Dragomirna păstrează picturi murale în naos și altar care datează din primii ani ai secolului al XVII-lea, realizate în tehnica *affresco* și arii finalizate în tehnica *mezzofresco*, cu porțiuni ample poleite cu foiță de aur.

O mare diversitate de elemente profilate din piatră - flori, nervuri, muluri în torsadă, scuturi sculptate și pictate, care nu există în nici una dintre bisericile medievale anterioare din Moldova, completează programul iconografic al picturii desfășurat pe 22 de registre, ce particularizează și dă unicitate Dragomirnei. O serie de degradări datorate infiltrațiilor s-au produs cu timpul pe porțiunile superioare ale naosului și la baza turlei, drept urmare în anii 60 ai sec. XX arhitectura bisericii a fost restaurată.

După 400 de ani și picturile murale sunt restaurate pentru prima dată de la crearea lor. Lucrările de mare anvergură au fost posibile prin derularea unui proiect finanțat cu fonduri europene între 10.11.2010 - 15.02.2012. Procesul complex de conservare și restaurare desfășurat pe 900 de metri pătrați de suprafață murală a pus în valoare aspectul său original spectaculos, elementele artistice și tehnice influențate de tehnica și cromatica picturii de miniatură. Intervențiile s-au realizat conform normelor internaționale ale restaurării, prin implicarea unei echipe ample de 50 de persoane. Proiectul *Dragomirna Church's 17<sup>th</sup> Century Frescoes, Suceava, ROMÂNIA* este unul dintre laureații *Premiului UE* pentru conservarea patrimoniului cultural/Premiile Europa Nostra ediția 2014, la categoria „Conservare”. Acest proiect a câștigat un Grand Prix și Public Choice Award.

The process of mural painting restoration which unfolded within this unique monument highlighted its exceptionally original shape after four hundred years since its creation. The large-scale interventions were performed on about 900 square meters of mural paintings preserved in the church nave and altar and allowed us to gradually discover the construction and ornamentation style, and the traditional techniques influenced by miniature and also by the European styles of the epoch. The works were carried out through a complex project financed with European funds.<sup>1</sup>

Anastasie Crimca, a remarkable personality of his time, was one of the two founders of the church. His visionary thinking led to the erection and ornamentation of the main church of Dragomirna in an absolutely particular manner and to the selection of the architect, of the teams of stonemasons who built and decorated

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<sup>1</sup> The Project *The Restoration and Conservation of the Cultural Heritage and Upgrading of the Related Infrastructure of the Dragomirna Monastery*, Suceava co., code SMIS 5565 was selected within the Regional Operational Program 2007 - 2013, priority axis 5, Main field of intervention 5.1 "Restoration and sustainable valorisation of the cultural heritage, the creation and upgrading of the related infrastructures" and co-financed by the European Union through the European Regional Development Fund. The project was implemented during the period March 2010 – March 2012. The conservation-restoration works were performed between 10.11.2010 and 15.02.2012.