

Crosses and Wayside Shrines in Museums. Research and Restoration

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There aren't many small architecture exhibits in museums. Not every museum can place a higher cross or a wayside shrine in its premises. The restoration isn't easy as well, because you need bigger premises for that purpose. The carvings, especially tracery, are often disintegrated or missing and sometimes it is impossible to recreate the former structure.

The exhibit in the Ethnographic Museum of Kupiškis – the wayside shrine depicting the birth of Jesus – lost its wooden pole, but the sculpture composition remained. The composition is cracked, with missing fragments, and the wood is heavily damaged naturally by open-air conditions. There is no polychrome left (ill. 5).



ill. 1.

That kind of artwork usually arrives to museums thanks to the local activists or curators of cultural heritage. In 2003 Pasvalys Regional Museum was presented with several works – the remaining cross and wayside shrine parts (ill. 1-3).



ill. 2.

The Lithuanian Art Museum was also presented with the cross fragment with a doubled-sided sculpture by the wood carver Vincas Svirskis that was found by the lake in 1960. The carving was decayed and muddy, and the deep cracks were filled with cement probably left from the previous repairs (ill. 4).



ill. 4.



ill. 5.



ill. 6.



ill. 10.

In the Alytus Museum of Regional History several crosses and wayside shrines are kept. One of them, with two chapels and sculptures fixed in them, once stood in Vaisodžiai village in Alytus region. The cross was found in critical condition in

2004 and transferred to the Alytus Museum of Regional History (ill. 6-8). Another cross, kept in the Alytus of Regional History, was erected in the first part of the 20th century near the dairy in Alytus. The authors of both crosses are unknown (ill. 9-10).



ill. 7.



ill. 8.



ill. 11.



ill. 9.

In Lazdijai Regional Museum several works by the wood carver Antanas Soraka are stored. The majority of them are small, but the museum was also presented with the entire wayside shrine depicting the Crucifixion scene (ill. 11-12).

In the process of restoration the crosses, wayside shrines and chapels were taken apart. The wood and the polychrome were cleaned and fixed. The chapels were put back together using wooden pins, the crosses got new poles. Despite the repairs, the decayed wood is not capable of lasting in outdoor conditions. A special microclimate is needed for the wood storage, so it is reasonable to keep the carvings in museums for an indoor display. These works had to be preserved, so that people can admire them not only in photographs.



ill. 12.