

“ST. HYACINTH’S MADONNAS”.
THE WORSHIP AND ARTISTIC ASPECTS OF ALABASTER FIGURES
IN KRAKÓW, PRZEMYŚL AND LVIV

In 1878 a group of three alabaster sculptures of Our Lady and Child, connected with the worship of St. Hyacinth Odrowąż, entered the province of scholarship. The oldest one, originating from the Lviv Dominican Convent, has been kept in the Holy Trinity Friary in Kraków since 1945. It was executed in Silesia or Austria before 1401, and the faithful who worshipped it received a Church indulgence. The newer sculpture, preserved in the Przemyśl Cathedral, is imported from the Netherlands and was created around 1460. In the 16th century it was kept in the Dominican Friary in Kraków, then the friars handed it over to the Tertiary Sisters Convent in Przemyśl, and in 1603 it was transferred to the Dominican Friary in the same city. This sculpture was the first to enjoy the fame of being a “St. Hyacinth’s Madonna”, as it was associated with the legend about the first Polish Dominican who was said to have saved the sculpture of Virgin Mary and Child from burning in Kiev, as noted in the “Life of St. Hyacinth” by Father Seweryn of Luboml (1594). The transfer of the miraculous figure from Kraków to Przemyśl was a demonstration of the unity of the two convents and was

connected with the growing conflict between the friaries in Małopolska and Rus in the 16th and 17th century, concerning the establishment of a Russian province separate from the Polish province of the Dominican Order. The worship of this figure soon gave rise to the development of a competitive tradition in Lviv, which was already evident in 1615. It strengthened the local sense of distinctiveness from the Polish province, represented by the Kraków Convent, and associated the statue of Mary and Child, long venerated in the Corpus Christi Church in Lviv, with the person of St. Hyacinth. A set of six alabaster-carved figures of Christ and apostles, created in the same workshop and at the same time as the Przemyśl St. Hyacinth’s Madonna, has been preserved in Kraków. It can be assumed that these sculptures were originally part of a small, exclusive altar set. The third figure has been always kept in the Kraków Dominican Convent and was probably created there in the first half of the 16th century. Its association with the worship of St. Hyacinth is also probably late, for it was first recorded as late as in the second half of the 19th century.