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Emblematic Language in Transylvanian Art in the  
17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> Centuries

\*

**Abstract of the Doctoral Thesis**

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**Keywords:**

applied emblematics, iconography, late Renaissance, Baroque, Transylvania, mural painting, funeral ceremonies, ephemeral decorations, epitaphs, political emblems, religious emblems.

**Synthesis of the main parts**

The publication of the volume entitled *Emblematum liber* of the Italian Humanist Andrea Alciati in 1531 marked the beginning of the first collection of emblems in the history of European culture, and at the same time also the starting point of an important cultural phenomenon, which had profoundly influenced various domains of 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century European culture. In the preface of the 1550 Lyon edition, the last one published in the author's lifetime, Alciati himself presented a series of possibilities of using his emblems in the decoration of various spaces and objects of human environment, such as the house walls, stained glasses, devises of the nobiliary courts, paintings, bowls, seals, garments, weaponry, and various house objects. These propositions show the plethora of possibilities of decorating with the help of this new genre at the borderline between humanist literature and fine arts. Beginning with the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and in parallel with the diversification of the printed emblem, this genre can be observed to increasingly disseminate to different genres of decorative and fine arts; this phenomenon reached at its highest at the turn of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Although in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and primarily in its last two decades, the research of various aspects of emblematics in late Renaissance and Baroque

art in Europe has become an important concern of art historiography, resulting in a series of monographs and studies of outstanding importance on the role of emblems in decorative and fine arts of the age, the case of applied emblematics in Transylvania has failed to raise the attention of experts, who only signalled scattered examples of its existence. This thesis proposes in the first place to draw up an inventory of the most important works containing emblematic representations, and to signal the most significant tendencies of emblematic language of 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century Transylvanian art. The timeliness of this approach is not only motivated by the lack of such art historical investigations in Transylvania and the important theoretical, methodological, and factual results on similar phenomena in other European regions, but also by the radical changes in the conditions of research that have occurred during the last two decades.

The first chapter of the thesis presents the historiography of the subject of emblematics, with special emphasis on the problem of applied emblematics, mainly as regards the interests of art historiography.

The second chapter is a case study of one of the most complex iconographic programmes of late Renaissance mural painting in Transylvania, the one of the group of paintings of the House with the Deer in Sighișoara. By identifying the graphic patterns of the representations at Sighișoara, I managed to reconstruct the programme of these paintings, based on a series of popular editions from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, illustrated with the technique of multiplicative graphics. Their subjects contain biblical scenes, scenes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, emblems of Theodore Beza, and a gallery of portraits of illustrious rulers and military officers.

The following chapters concentrate on the various uses of emblematic language. The third chapter presents the already known cases of emblem representations in secular spaces in Transylvania, and the fourth one in Protestant churches of the Principality. One must note the prevalence of representations influenced by the important works of political theory of the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> centuries in the first case (Zincgreff, Reinzer, Vanossi, etc.), while in the second case the influence of German devotional literature on the interior decorations of a Protestant church (especially the illustrations of a translation of Johann Gerhard).

On the basis of the case studies it can be noted that the presence of emblems in the fine arts of the Principality is not only owed to the mechanical takeover of some graphic patterns, but in some cases, like that of Johann Zabanius or the Jesuit funeral ceremonies, a part of the Transylvanian intellectual elite of the age also assumed the modes of application of emblematic language for certain concrete occasions, being able to conceive coherent emblematic works for transmitting their intellectual message. In this sense one must note the significant case of the politician of Sibiu, presented in chapter five, who in the course of his brilliant political career always made consistent use of the new possibilities of emblematic language in order to emphasize his political objectives. By the distinct presentation of the decorations of funeral ceremonies in chapter six, besides the fact that these are the most spectacular iconographic programmes based on emblems, I also wished to remark the importance of ephemeral artistic genres in Transylvania, since the importance of these genres has not been acknowledged in earlier scholarship. The epitaphs and funeral monuments discussed in the last chapter also belong to the subject of funeral emblematics.

The presented examples of emblematic representations in Transylvania in the 17<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century strengthen the belief that, besides the traditional occasions of using visual elements in various public and private spaces, the phenomenon of emblematics was present in several strata of Transylvanian society, from that of the political and cultural elite to that of urban or even rural communities. The importance of these images lies mainly in the fact that they offer primary information on their process of creation (e.g. the role of graphic patterns and their way of adaptation), and on the roles and functions of images in the Transylvanian society of the age.

The Appendix contains a series of important written sources referring to the subject of the thesis. In the first part I published the Viennese correspondence of Johann Zabanius (1692–1693) on the edition of one of the most important prints with emblems connected to Transylvania, entitled *Rosetum Franckianum*, and in the second part of the Appendix there are descriptions of the most important funeral ceremonies of the Principality.

The Appendix also contains the 277 illustrations of the thesis.

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