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RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH
CONDUCTED IN 2014
ON THE INTERIOR FINISHING OF THE
ROTUNDA IN THE UNIVERSITY OF
TARTU'S OLD ANATOMICAL THEATRE

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this article is to present a survey of the research conducted in oldest part of the University of Tartu's Old Anatomical Theatre in October 2014.¹ The research was commissioned by the University of Tartu Museum, since it is planned to utilize the rotunda as the museum's formal hall and exhibition space. The objective of the research was to collect specific data in preparation for the auditorium's restoration project. The rotunda's walls, ceiling and interior wooden details were examined.

One of the main objectives of the research was to ascertain if the neoclassical paintings executed by Karl August Senff (1770–1838) have survived, and if so, to what extent. Since the information on the presumed painting is contradictory and fragmentary, thorough research was conducted at the same time in the archives.

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Translated by Juta Ristsoo.

1 *Tartu ülikooli vana anatoomikumi (rotundi) siseviimistluse uuringud. Uurimistööde aruanne.* Compiled by Hilkka Hiiop, Kristina Aas, Grete Nilp, Kaisa-Piia Pedajas, Kristiina Tiideberg, Helen Volber, Tiina Vint (Tallinn: H&M Restudio OÜ, 2014). Copy in the possession of the article's authors.

SURVEY OF THE HISTORY OF THE ROTUNDA'S CONSTRUCTION AND PAINTINGS

The University of Tartu's Old Anatomical Theatre, which was built on the southern slope of Toomemägi Hill in place of the Swedish-era Karl Gustav bastion, was the first building to be completed for the university when it reopened in 1802. The building we see today was constructed in three large phases. The initial building was a neoclassical rotunda with a square rustic base and low dome, built according to the plans drawn up by Johann W. Krause, the university's architect (Fig. 1). Construction started in June 1803 and was completed in September 1805.

Four Toscana columns and an avant-corps with triangular gables rose on the four sides of the rotunda, which tied the round rotunda and square base into an integrated whole. The rotunda was enlivened by seven narrow windows, with balustrades in the lower portion and eight smaller mezzanino windows above. Urns (a total of eight) connected by a forged grille were located on the balconies.² The dome was crowned by a small lantern³.

The rotunda accommodated a large circular auditorium, where lectures were held, and preparations and other tools were stored. The ceiling of the rotunda was initially supported by eight Doric columns.⁴ A staircase led from the rotunda to the space under the dome. The auxiliary and preparation rooms were located in the rotunda's basement and, in the middle there was an elevating device for raising the corpses into the circular auditorium. A neoclassical ossuary and morgue was also built near the anatomical theatre. Between 1825 and 1827, two-story semi-circular wings were added to the rotunda based on Krause's plans.

2 The forged grille and urns have not survived. In the course of the interior work conducted in 2015 (architect Kaido Kepp), the two urns on the front façade were reconstructed. Based on photos, the new urns were produced (by Kaisa Lindström and Lauri Läänelaid, students in architecture and urban planning at the Estonian Academy of Arts) from fibreglass and filled with concrete for weight. A forge grille and gallery were added on the rear façade, which connects the Old Anatomical Theatre with the wooden building on the side of the moat.

3 The lantern was restored in 2012–2013 during work on the facade. During the construction work, no indications were found of the windows of the former lantern. The builder primarily based the lantern on the drawings made by Johann W. Krause in 1804. Estonian Historical Archives (hereinafter EAA), 2100-11-129.

4 Eda Tursk, "Anatomiline teater", *Johann Wilhelm Krause 1757–1828, Linnaehitajana Tartus*, 3 (Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 2011), 245. The plan to remove the columns is mentioned in correspondence from 1855–1856 (EAA, 402-10-187, 9, 12; EAA, 402-5-471, 203), and the work is accepted in July 1857 (EAA, 402-5-529, 70–71).

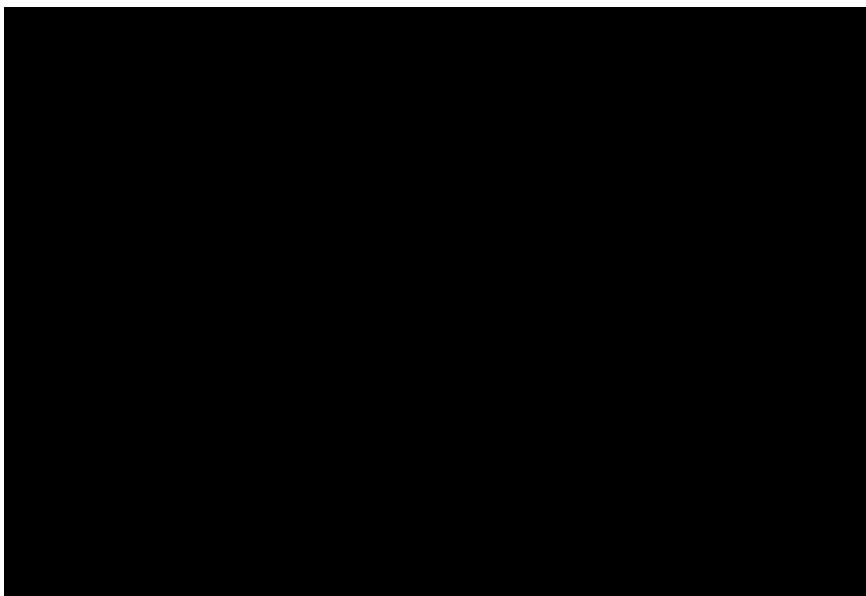


Fig. 1. August Philipp Clara. Rotunda of the Old Anatomical Theatre. Aquatint, 1821. Estonian History Museum, G 6731.

Between 1856 and 1860 extensions were added to the wings of the building (architect Karl Rathaus), after which the anatomical theatre more or less acquired its current appearance. In 1911, a wooden annex was added to the east wing facing the moat (architect Pavel Nikitin).

The walls and ceiling of the anatomical theatre were decorated with paintings in the grisaille technique. The artist was Karl August Senff, the university's first drawing teacher and well-known graphic artist. The paintings are attributed to Senff based on Krause's notes on the anatomical theatre's construction plans and accompanying documentation⁵. The paintings in the anatomical theatre are among the few neoclassical murals in Estonia that can be attributed to a specific artist⁶.

5 TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 28, l. 5p; EAA, 2100-11-142, 1p.

6 *Ehitusmälestis Vana Anatoomikum Tartus Toomemäel. Ajalooline öiend*, Vol I, ed. by Helmi Üprus (Tartu, 1965). Manuscript in the National Heritage Board archives, P-599. Also signed are the murals by Gottlieb Welté in the Lohu Manor, that were discovered under the existing wallpaper in 1966 (В. В. Филатов, "Реставрация стенной живописи художника Готлиба Вельте", *Сообщения ВЦНИИПКР*, 26 (1970), 177–186) and the mural in Höreda Manor, which are signed by P. J. Neus (Juhan Maiste, *Rapla raj Höreda mõisa uurimis- ja projekteerimistööd. Maalingute ajalooline öiend*, Vol. III (Tallinn, 1980), 4. Manuscript in the National Heritage Board archives, A-404.

It is known that the murals were located in the upper portion of the rotunda between the eight small windows, where Senff has painted emblems in shades of grey that recalled reliefs.⁷ It has been suggested that they were located in the shallow niches between the small windows.⁸ It has also been claimed in the literature that Senff executed actual reliefs in the anatomical theatre⁹, but the sources speak of paintings in the *en camaïeu* technique (*Zwischen den Kleinen fenstern sind Embleme en camaieu als reliefs gemalt...*¹⁰; *...sind Embleme won dem Univ. Zeichenmeister Carl Senf grau in grau gemalt*¹¹, *Die Decke des Saales war en Camayeu gemalt...*¹²). The head of Apollo (*Apollos Antlitz*) was depicted on the ceiling painting.¹³ The subject depicted on the murals is not known. On one of the construction plans for the anatomical theatre, Krause made the comment that Senff painted Laocoön (*Senf malte Laokoon*)¹⁴, but it is not clear where the painting was located. The paintings are not indicated on the construction plans.¹⁵

The literature includes various facts about the number of paintings and the times they were completed. Based on the number of niches between the windows, the number eight has been suggested.¹⁶ Actually, Krause does not indicate anywhere how many paintings there were, but only that the paintings were *located* between the eight small windows, which meant the actual number may have been different. In her master's thesis dealing with Krause's work, Olga Paris has written that there were actually a total of 18 murals¹⁷ and, apparently based on Paris's

7 TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 28, l. 5p; f. 9, s. 30, l. 4p.

8 Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 237; Mare Viiralt, Leili Kriis, "Tartu Ülikooli *Theatrum Anatomicum*", *Tartu ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi, XXXIV, 200 aastat Vana-Anatoomikumi* (Tartu: Tartu Ülikooli Kirjastus, 2005), 15.

9 Olga Paris, *Johann Wilhelm Krause*, MA thesis (Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 1943), 61; Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 237.

10 TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 30, l. 4p.

11 TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 28, l. 5p.

12 Johann W. Krause, "Das erste Jahrzehnt her ehemaligen Universität Dorpat. Aus den Memoiren des Professors Johann Wilhelm Krause", *Baltische Monatschrift*, 54 (1902), 95.

13 Krause, "Das erste Jahrzehnt her ehemaligen Universität Dorpat", 95; TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 28, l. 5p.; TÜR KHO f. 9, s. 30, l. 4p.

14 EAA, 2100-11-142, 1p. See also Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 257–258.

15 Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 236–237.

16 *Ehitusmälestis Vana Anatoomikum Tartus Toomemäl. Ajalooline öiend*, 4; Niina Raid, *Tartu vanemaid ehitisi* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1981), 72; Viiralt, Kriis, "Tartu Ülikooli *Theatrum Anatomicum*", 15.

17 Paris, *Johann Wilhelm Krause*, 61.

work, the same has been stated elsewhere.¹⁸ The claim that 18 paintings existed is based on Krause's comment on one of the anatomical theatre plans, where the list of the construction jobs for 1804 includes the comment: *d 18ten Reliefs. d 24 Consolen.*¹⁹ However, this number probably indicates the date (18 September) when the work was completed and it is far from clear whether these reliefs were even connected to Senff's paintings. On the same drawings we read that Senff completed the Laocoön on 11 July 1805. Based on these scant notes, it has been suggested that the paintings were worked on between September 1804 and July 1805.²⁰ However, Senff could clearly not have started work before 1805, because the interior finishing and plastering was being done in the spring-summer of that year.²¹ Thus, it is likely that Senff worked on the paintings in the summer of 1805.

Actually, that is all that is known about the paintings that were located in the anatomical theatre. All the information that exists today is derived from Krause's notes and published memoirs. In his memoirs, Krause tells a somewhat anecdotal story in connection with the disgruntled Professor Isenflamm, in which he mentions the Apollo painted on the rotunda's ceiling: "The ceiling of hall was painted *en Camayeu*; in a halo of holiness the antique Apollo looked down approvingly at the work being done for the benefit of the people, where something useful for life was being learned from death. Isenflamm's taste demanded that a strong metal clamp be installed in the middle of the beautifully painted head, so a chandelier could be attached. The most tastefully summarised opinion: "*ischte nicht*, let there be light everywhere!" A few

¹⁸ Also see Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 236; Juhan Maiste, Kadi Polli, Mariann Raisma, *Alma Mater Tartuensis: das Anatomische Theater und sein Architekt Johann Wilhelm Krause* (Tartu: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2006), 12; Juhan Maiste, Kadi Polli, Mariann Raisma, *Alma Mater Tartuensis. Tartu Ülikool ja tema arhitekt Johann Wilhelm Krause* (Tartu: Eesti Keele Sihtasutus, 2003), 252.

¹⁹ EAA, 2100-11-142, 1p. The drawing along with the text under discussion is published in the catalogue *Johann Wilhelm Krause 1757–1828, Linnaehitajana Tartus*, 3 (Tartu: Tartu Ülikool, 2011), see Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 257–258.

²⁰ Paris, *Johann Wilhelm Krause*, 61; Tursk, "Anatoomiline teater", 236–237.

²¹ Viralt, Kriis, "Tartu Ülikooli *Theatrum Anatomicum*", 14.

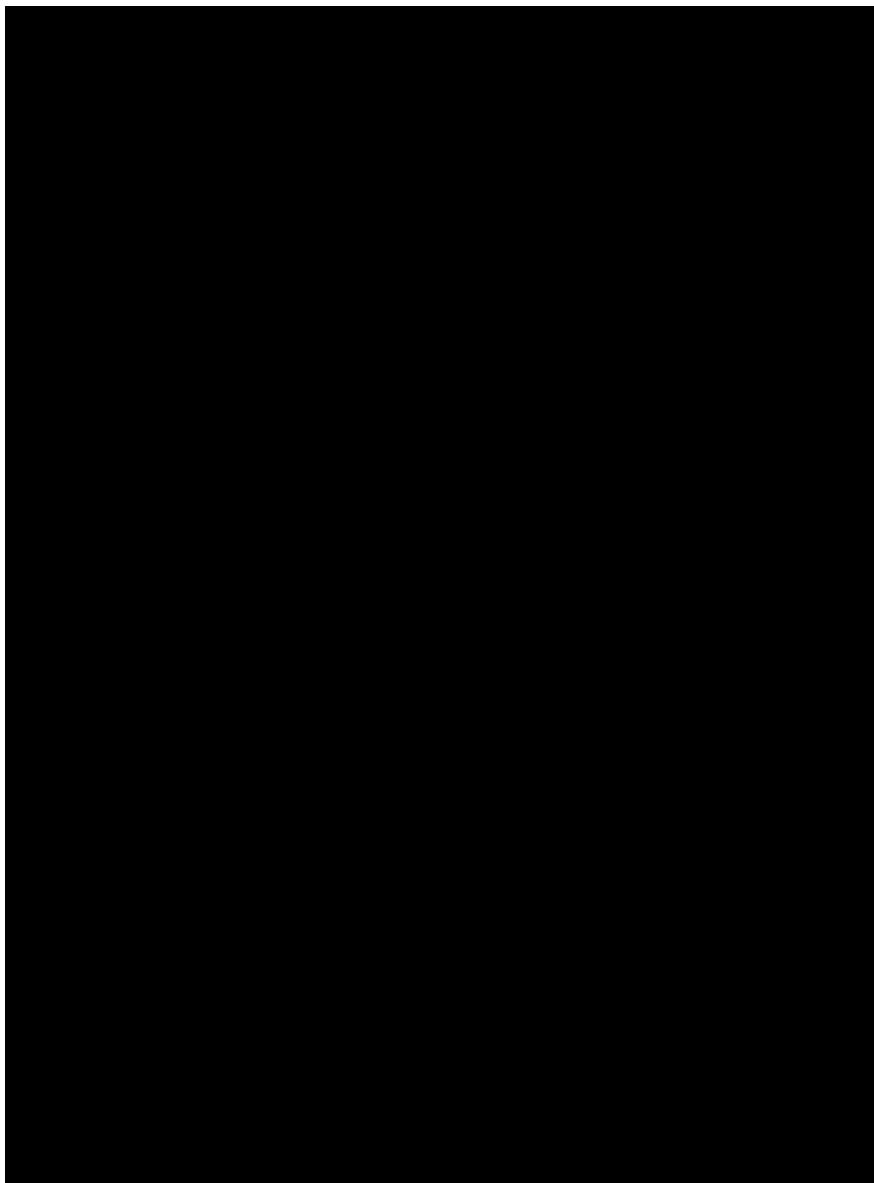


Fig. 2. Personnel and students at the University of Tartu Institute of Anatomy 1927–28. Photo: Armin Lomp, 1928. University of Tartu Museum, ÜAMF 287:9.

weeks later, curtains were needed to close off the eight large windows: “*ischte nischt*”, everything is blinded! Wonderful!”²²

Nothing about the paintings in the anatomical theatre has been found in the archival materials related to Senff, and they are not mentioned in Senff’s personal file at the university²³. Senff’s work on the paintings in the anatomical theatre has also not been mentioned in any of art history writing related to Senff’s work²⁴. Senff is also not known to have executed any other monumental paintings.²⁵ The antiquity-related compositions, which are alluded to by the information related to Apollo and Laocoön, are exceptional in his body of work. At the same time, Senff had to undertake many tasks while working at the University of Tartu and, in some respects, performed the role of university artist.²⁶

When the paintings were destroyed or painted over is not clear. It has been mentioned that Senff’s paintings are probably under the coat of lime plaster or been covered by whitewash after World War II²⁷. However, the paintings are not visible on the interior photos made before World War II (Fig. 2). Instead, on the photos, we see something resembling framed panel paintings. Unfortunately, the location of these presumable paintings could not be determined and their temporal, technical and spatial framework is still unclear.

²² Die Decke des Saales war en Camayeu gemalt, Apollos Antlitz sah aus einer Glorie mit Beifall auf die für Menschenwohl bezweckenden Arbeiten, aus dem Tode fürs Leben zu lernen. Isenflamms Geschmack trieb diesem schön gezeichneten Kopfe eine starke eiserne Krampe ins Zentrum, um einen Kronleuchter daran zu hängen. Recht geschmackvoll und der vorgefaßten Meinung konsequent: “ischte nischt, hat all kai Liechtl!” Etliche Monate später mußten Gardinen vor acht große Fenster angeschafft werden: “ischte nischt, es blendet allwegel!” Wunderlich! (Krause, “Das erste Jahrzehnt her ehemaligen Universität Dorpat”, 95).

²³ EAA, 402-3-661.

²⁴ See Wilhelm Neumann, *Karl August Senff. Ein baltischer Kupferstecher* (Reval: F. Kluge, 1895); Tiina Nurk, “Karl August Senff”, *Tartu Riikliku Kunstimuuseumi almanahh 1*, ed. Vaike Tiik (Tartu, 1964), 52–62; Voldemar Vaga, *Kunst Tartus XIX sajandil* (Tallinn: Kunst, 1971).

²⁵ However, the architect Krause had come in contact with the execution of murals, see Paris, *Johann Wilhelm Krause*, 9.

²⁶ The job of university drawing teacher and copper engraver included teaching classes, as well as illustrating the university’s publications. In addition, Senff also performed other ongoing tasks: engraving the copper plaques on the cornerstone of the university’s main building, doing design work (university medal, embroidery for the professors’ coats, etc.). Also see Juta Keevallik, Kristiina Tiideberg, Gerd-Helge Vogel, “Karl August Senff (1770–1838), teerajaja”, *Eesti Kunsti Ajalugu*, 3, (forthcoming: Tallinn: Eesti Kunstiakadeemia, 2016).

²⁷ *Ehitusmälestis Vana Anatoomikum Tartus Toomemäel. Ajalooline öiend*, 4.

THE EXAMINATION OF THE WALLS AND CEILINGS AND SUBSEQUENT RESULTS

The examinations conducted in 2014 confirmed the prior observations related to the interior finishing,²⁸ i.e. that the walls are covered by only one coat of plaster with the characteristics of a later period, which are then covered with individual finishing coats. The hollow niches between the windows, in which the neoclassical paintings presumably existed, are clearly part of this plaster coat.

An earlier coat of historically finished plaster was only found in one part of the room – near the original staircase under the coved ceiling in the area between the windows. This consisted of a relatively large fragment of plaster with a finished surface (ca 1.2m x 1m) in a dark blue almost black shade (Fig. 3). The plaster fragment's polychromy clearly alludes to its earlier character and conscious consideration of the original architectonics of the space. Based on the assumption that the fragment indicates the original neoclassical finish of the building, one can suggest a hypothetical stratification for the interior finishing of the space. The basis for the following determination of the construction phases is based on the assumption that the fragment dates back to the Krause era.

In the **first finishing phase** of the rotunda, the coved ceiling was missing or was considerably higher, since the finished fragment stretches vertically under the coved ceiling for about 30 cm. It ends as a straight line in the plaster, which could indicate the initial location of the ceiling perimeter.

An approximately 4–5-cm-wide strip, on which a small piece of the plaster used to model the cornice was found, cuts sharply across the painted detail and coat of plaster. Based on this find, we can presume that the original cornice zone of the upper part of the wall was at the same height as the cornice under the current coved ceiling. The cornice is also visible on the plans for the anatomical theatre that date from Krause's day (Figs. 4 and 5).

The so-called Krause era coat of plaster follows the diagonal on the edge of the stairs that led to the room under the dome, with an additional light beige stripe that was painted at the same time, appearing as a separate coat (Fig. 3).

²⁸ *Vana Anatoomikum. Uurimistööde programm, muinsuskaitse eritingimused interjööri restaureerimiseks*, koost. Nele Rohtla, Ave Elken (Tartu: Arhitektuuriklubi OÜ, 2007). Copy of the article in the possession of the article's authors.

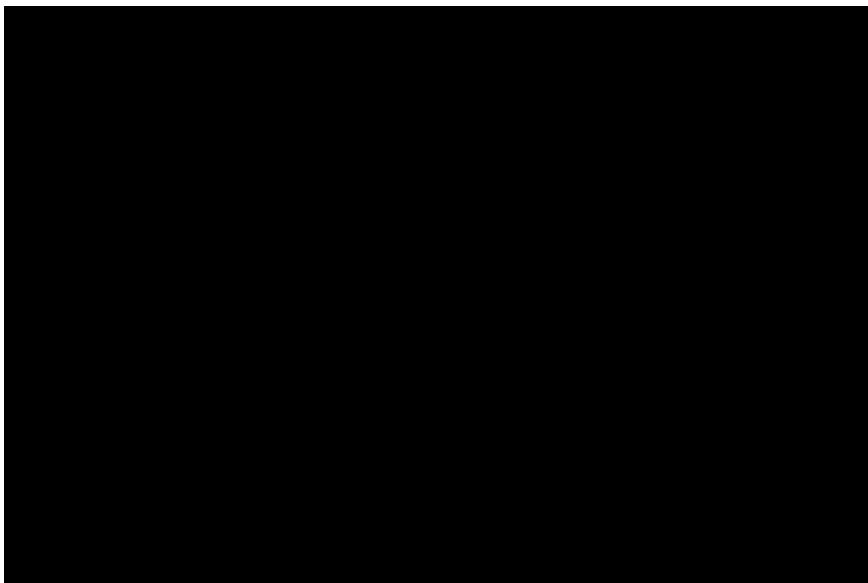


Fig. 3. The Krause era plaster fragment on the wall of the anatomical theatre. Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

The most surprising find made during the research was that there were probably no hollow niches between the windows in the Krause era interior, since the dark blue plaster fragment that was found runs as a smooth surface under the niche. The niches can also not be identified on Krause's plans from 1804 (Fig. 4), or the sketches made for the reconstruction that date from 1820 (Fig. 5). This fact also excludes the current assumption that the grisaille paintings were located in and were the same size as the niches. The location of the paintings is also made questionable by the fact that the stairs leading above the ceiling run diagonally across one of the niches, and it is improbable that the one of the painting would have been located directly under the stairs. However, the only possible location for the paintings is the area between the upper windows, because there is no room for the paintings on the walls in the other areas. Cabinets or stoves have been located along the rotunda's interior walls in the lower areas since the early 19th century (Fig. 4).

The Krause era plaster fragment that was found is too detached to allow for any definite conclusions to be drawn about the nature of the

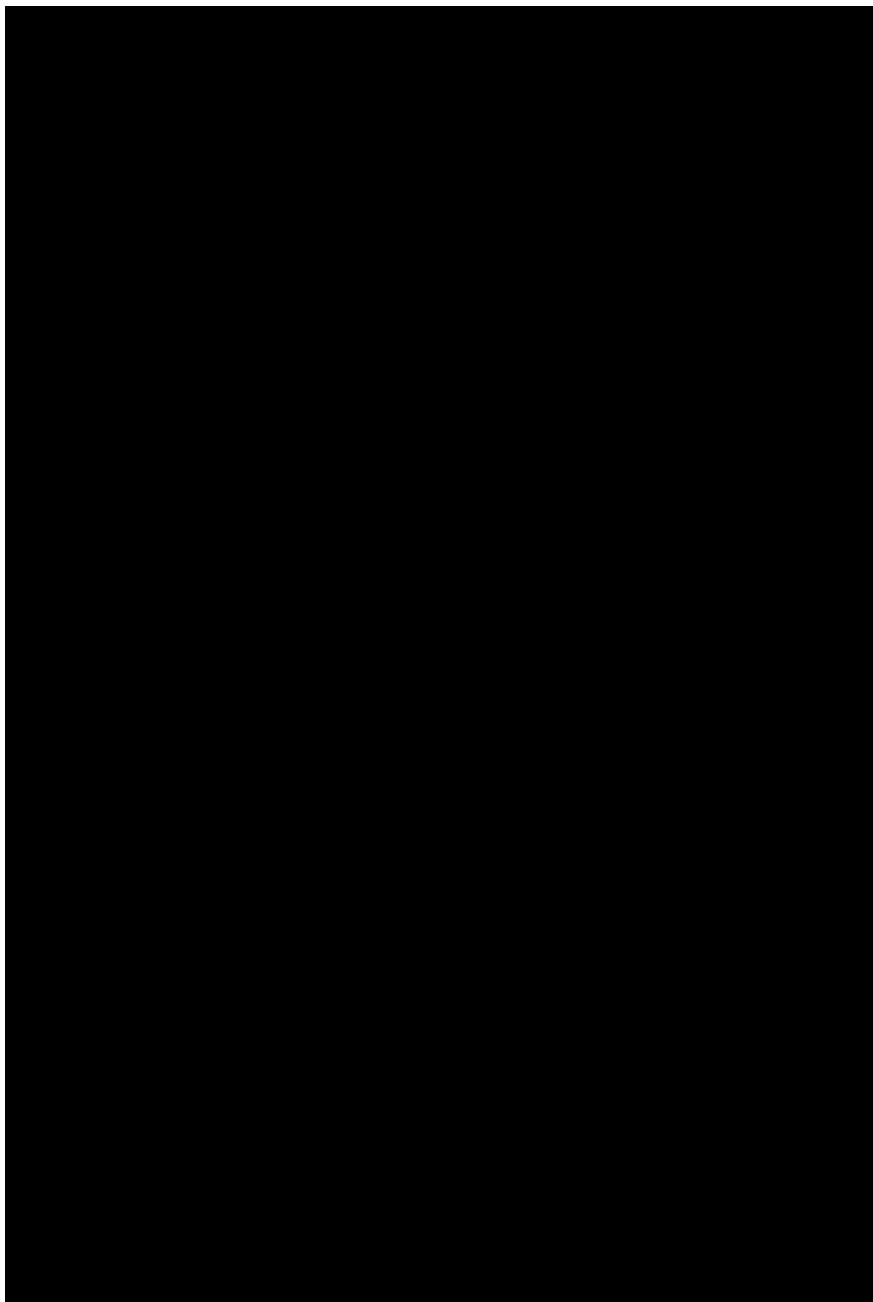


Fig. 4. J. W. Krause. Cross-section of the anatomical theatre's rotunda. 1804. Estonian Historical Archives, 2100-11-129, 4.

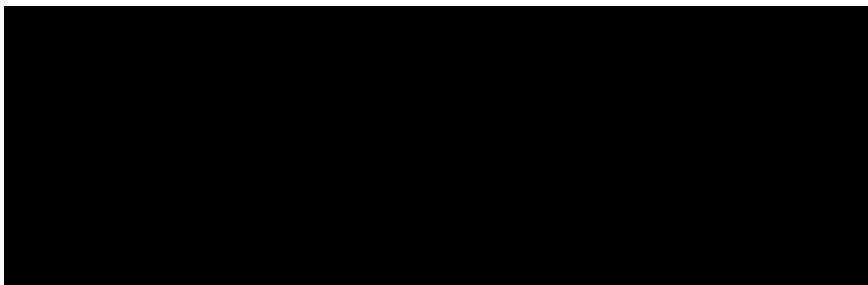


Fig. 5. J. W. Krause. Plans for the expansion of the anatomical theatre. 1820. Estonian Historical Archives, 402-5-138, 13.

initial finishing. In hopes of finding other indicates of earlier plaster (or to exclude its existence) about 100 small-scale probes were made in the plaster. The probes were not able to identify any other traces of the original plaster.

However, the examination did not resolve the question of why one relatively large fragment of finished plaster has survived and a dense network of holes was hammered in it in order to secure the next coat of plaster, while the plaster was totally removed from the rest of the room.

In the rotunda's **second** large-scale **finishing phase**, the walls were re-plastered (anew) and the hollow niches that are visible today were apparently modelled, since the plaster has been applied to the walls as a single coat. The current ceiling with coved ceiling was probably built at the same time, since no difference was found between the plaster on the ceiling and the walls. The subsequent construction of the current ceiling precludes the possibility of finding Senff's painting (head of Apollo).

In the first finishing coat, most of the niches are covered in a brownish shade, to which stripes have apparently added along the edges to highlight the shape of the niches. The probing results preclude the existence of paintings in the current niches.

In the second construction and finishing phase, the stairs still exist, since the polychromy of the first coat of plaster in the niche under the stairs takes the diagonal edge of the stairs into account. The stairs were eliminated during the rotunda's **third construction phase**, which must have occurred at 1889, because the stairs are clearly visible on a drawing that evidently dates from that year (Fig. 6).

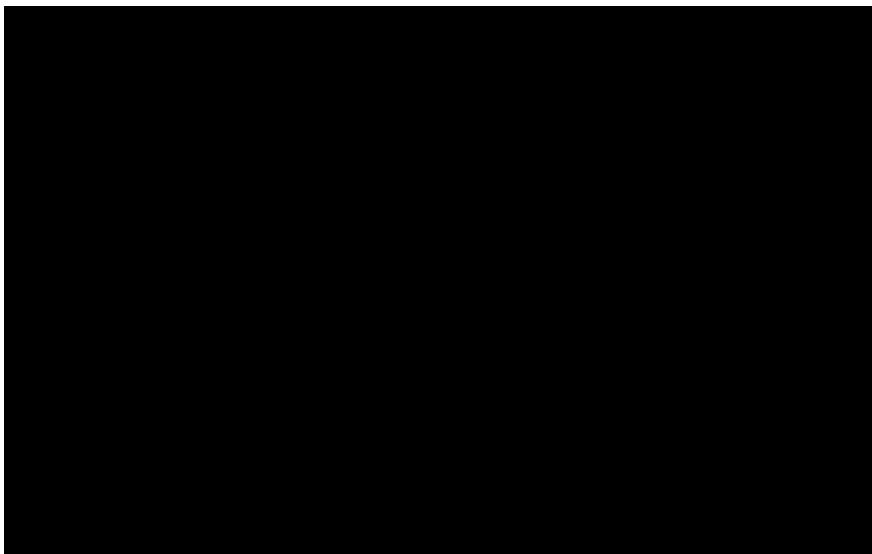


Fig. 6. Reinhold Guleke (?). Floor plan of the anatomical theatre's second floor. Ca 1889. Estonian Historical Archives, 2100-11-129, 5.

RESULTS OF THE EXAMINATION OF THE HISTORICAL WOODEN FURNITURE

Along with the examination of the walls and ceiling, an examination was also conducted of the historical wooden furniture located in the rotunda. As a result of examinations conducted in 2007, it has been concluded that apparently all the paint coats have survived on the rotunda's furniture.²⁹ Therefore, by comparing the probes of the various pieces of furniture, an attempt was made to determine the temporal sequence of the items.

The historical furniture that has survived in the rotunda includes a rostrum with a podium, a set of benches attached to the floor, a demonstration table amid the benches, a three-part wall cabinet with meander ornamentation and a narrow cabinet (Fig. 7).

The results of the probes show that the first finishing coat on the benches, table and wall cabinet are identical, from which we can con-

²⁹ *Vana Anatoomikum. Uurimistööde programm, muinsuskaitse eritingimused interjööride restaureerimiseks*, 18–19.

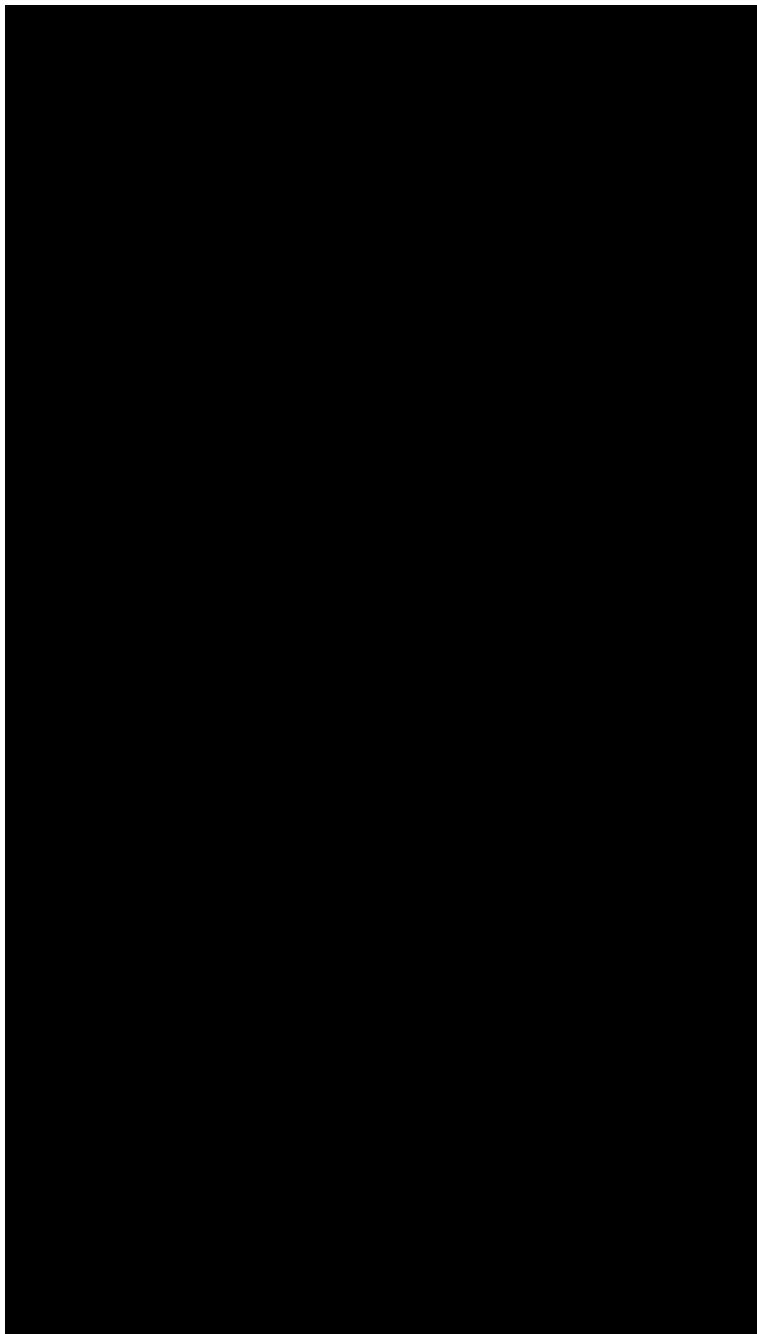


Fig. 7. Floor plan of the rotunda. Figure by Anne Arus, 2015.

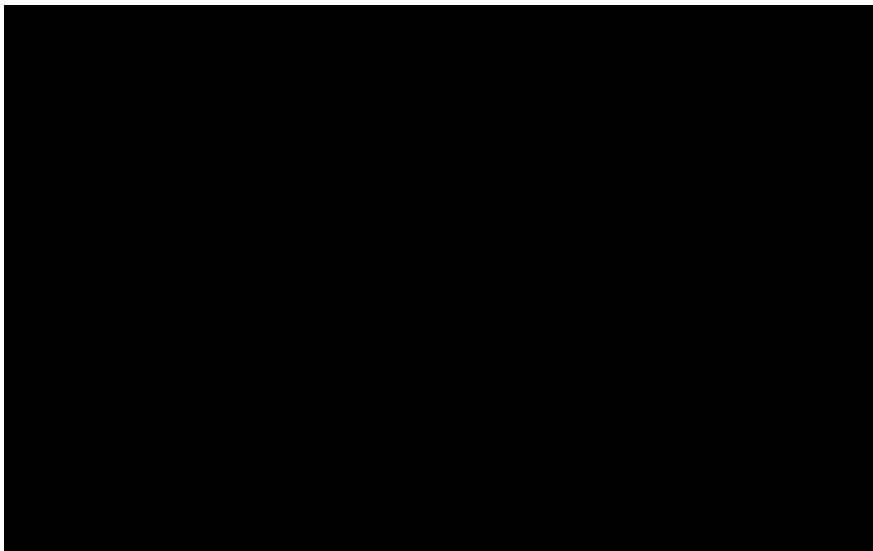


Fig. 8. Demonstration table and benches. Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

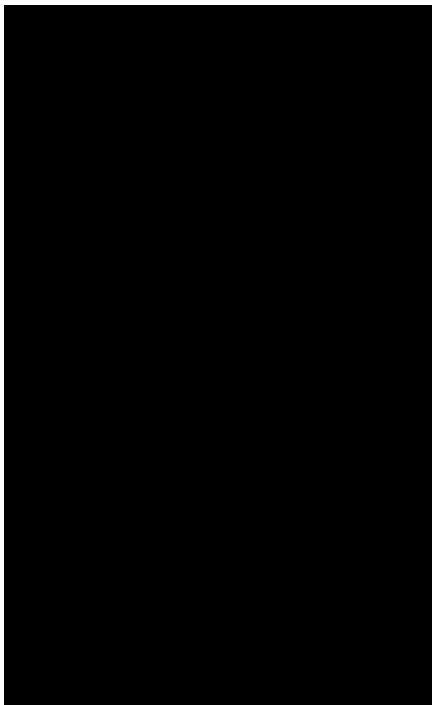


Fig. 9. Demonstration table. Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

clude that they were evidently built at the same time. The benches and table already existed by 1889 at the latest, since they appear on a drawing from that time (Fig. 6).

The round **demonstration table** is located in the middle of the room, where six hollowed-out depressions for the six table legs have survived in the floor (Fig. 8). The legs are detachable (Fig. 9). The tabletop is comprised of two sections: the lower section which is permanently attached, and the upper section which is placed atop it. A wide edge has partially survived on the top section, which is designed to hide the section below it. There are 12 wooden castors

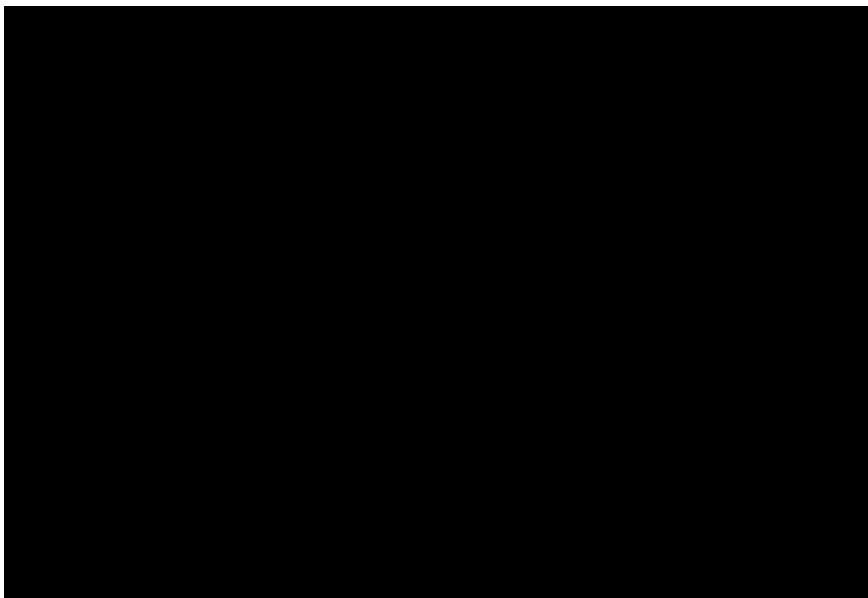


Fig. 10. Interior view of the University of Tartu's Old Anatomical Theatre. Photo: Herbert Normann, ca 1925. University of Tartu Library, F 78, Fo Norm 15:2.

with metal axles in depressions in the lower section that allow the upper section to be rotated in a 360-degree circle.

An additional plate was located between the table and benches, which has not survived but is still visible on a drawing from the late 19th century (Fig. 6) as well as a photo from 1925 (Fig. 10). The additional plate was supported on one side by the demonstration table where a small 50-cm-long indentation has survived in the top of the demonstration table; and on the other side it was supported by the inner circle of benches. Initially the first row of benches was comprised of an unbroken semi-circle, so that the additional plate could be moved along with the top of the table along the entire set of benches. A small indentation runs along the entire length of the middle section of benches (Fig. 11).

The wall cabinet is located in a niche behind the blackboard (Fig. 12). The first finishing coat found during the examination of the cabinet is a bluish shade that does not appear on the extensions located on either side of the central section and the cornice that runs over the central section. Therefore, it can be concluded that these sections of the cabinet were added later. The smooth joints between the different sections and

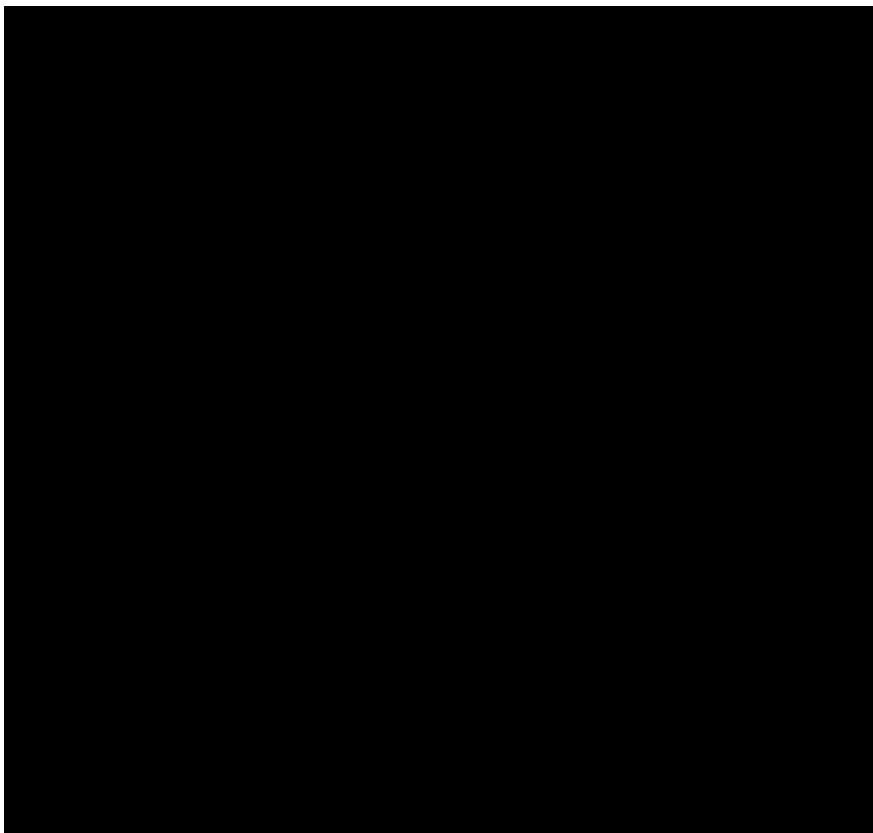


Fig. 11. Depressions on the table and benches for the installation of the additional plate.
Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

similar woodcarvings allude to the possibility that they were made by the same master craftsman or workshop. The wooden carvings decorating the cabinet – the dogtooth cornice and ornamentation on the upper section of the cabinet – have the same colouration as the cabinet. The use of several shades in the same coat was not discovered during the tests.

The form and wooden carvings of the **narrow cabinet** are much simpler than those of the wall cabinet and based on the colour probes, this cabinet was produced later than the central section of the wall cabinet.

Based on the colour probes, the **rostrum** is the oldest piece of furniture in the current interior of the rotunda (Fig. 13). The first finishing coat on the benches, table and wall cabinet coincides with the third

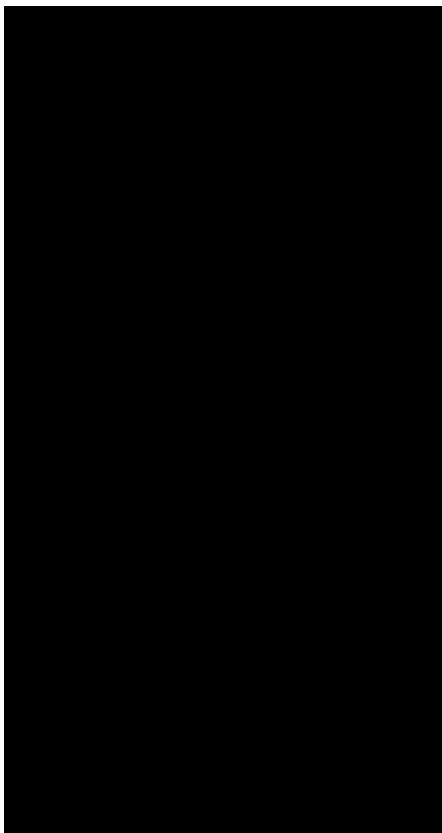


Fig. 12. Wall cabinet. Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

finishing coat on the rostrum. Initially, its finish was dark grey, and the wooden carvings (garlands, bows, central console and framework of the rear decorative panel) were light blue. Similarly to the first finishing coat, two shades of colour have also been used in the second one – light blue on the main body and light yellow on the wooden carvings. This is followed by five coats of paint (blue, yellow, beige, light grey and the current white) in which the carvings are the same colour as the remaining wooden sections. In 2015, the authors of the article made additional probes on the furniture, which revealed grained finishes on the rostrum, benches and table. Whether the graining on all three objects dates from the same period or not cannot be determined based on the current research.

The **podium** accompanying the **rostrum** is from a considerably later period. The current podium was built in the mid-1920s, when a new wide blackboard was installed in the rotunda (Fig. 2).³⁰ The earlier narrow podium is visible on a photo that dates from 1925 (Fig. 10). In the course of the research, the current podium was not demolished in order to search for signs of the earlier podium, although it is possible that they do exist under the current one.

The new blackboard installed in the 1920s also caused changes to be made in the benches. In order for the new blackboard to fit, one bench

³⁰ A sign with the manufacturer's information has survived on the blackboard: *Paul Gebhardt Söhne, Physikalische werkstatt Berlin C.54.*

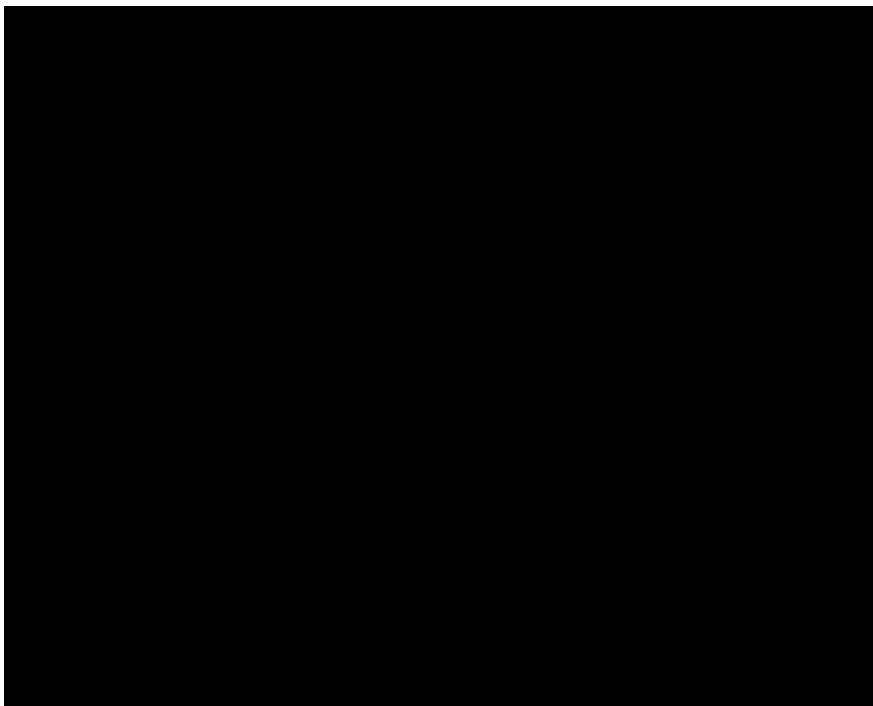


Fig. 13. Rostrum. Photo: Andres Tennus, 2015.

section from either side of the blackboard had to be removed. The traces of the removed sectors are clearly visible on the floor in a photo from 1928 and the same traces can still be detected on the floor today. The removal of the benches from either end is confirmed by the probing results: the earlier finishing coats are missing from the cross-sections. In 1925, two additional sectors of benches were added to the middle, up against the blackboard. It is possible that this was done at the same time that the sectors on the ends were removed, with the goal of ensuring the same number of seats.

The floor of the rotunda was not probed in the course of the research, but a visual examination of the floor revealed that indications of the old furnishings have survived. The locations of the old columns were clearly visible on the floor. The additional probes conducted in 2015 by the authors of the article confirmed that the openings in the boards have been filled in. In the centre of the room the opening that was used to raise

the corpses into the auditorium from the room below is visible. Future research must ascertain whether the hatch in the floor has survived or not. The conformity of the hatch in the floor and the “column traces” with J. W. Krause’s initial design (Fig. 4) confirm that the current floor dates from the first construction phase of the anatomical theatre. On the right side of the blackboard, new flooring is also visible, but Krause’s drawing shows that a water outlet was located here: apparently this was closed off when the benches were built. The niche with a door located in the western wall of the rotunda, where Krause’s drawing indicates that the sewage was located, also requires further research.

WHAT CAN BE CONCLUDED ABOUT THE INTERIOR OF THE ANATOMICAL THEATRE FROM THE RESEARCH RESULTS?

For those who are used seeing ascending rows of benches installed as an amphitheatre in the rotunda of the anatomical theatre, it may come as a bit of a surprise that these were not initially installed in the Tartu Anatomical Theatre. Several different design solutions for the interior by Krause have survived, on which the earlier ones include benches installed as an amphitheatre. For some reason, these were not built and according to the early inventory lists, there were 32 chairs in the auditorium where the students could sit.³¹ Krause designed eight columns for the auditorium of the anatomical theatre, which have been called purely decorative³², i.e. they did not support a ceiling. Consoles and cabinets were attached to the columns, where the collections could be stored. There were also large cabinets and tables along the walls. The validity of this picture is also confirmed by the traces of the Krause era furnishings that are still visible in the floor today, incl. the locations of the columns.

The third large expansion of the anatomical theatre took place in the 1850s. Under the guidance of architect Rathaus, the wings were expanded for a second time between 1858 and 1860. Immediately prior to the work on the wings, “expansion work” was also executed in the rotunda’s circular auditorium – this is how the activities are described

31 Tursk, “Anatoomiline teater”, 236.

32 *Ibidem*, 233. Also see Rathaus’s letter dated 9 March 1856, EAA, 402-5-471, 203.

in the relevant correspondence and other documentation of the day.³³ The columns built by Krause were removed around 1856–1857 so that the benches could be installed as an amphitheatre. The latter is also confirmed by Rathaus's letter of March 1856.³⁴ The need to remove the columns is also clearly indicated by the bases of the former columns that are now located under the benches. Although the exact time when the benches were installed cannot be determined by the current research, it can be stated they were probably installed immediately after the columns were removed.

Thus, in summary, one can conclude that in the late 1850s new interiors were created for the circular auditorium, which are visible on the drawing from 1889 (Fig. 6) and comprise the characteristic part of the current furnishings. In a way, the installation of the new interior realized Krause's unexecuted plan to install classic amphitheatre-style benches in the anatomical theatre.

In the 19th century, there was also a staircase in the circular auditorium that led to the room under the dome. If on Krause's drawing (Fig. 4) we see that the stairs were the same width throughout, then on the drawing from 1889, the lower section of the stairs is narrower than the upper part. It is possible that these were the same Krause era stairs that were made narrower when the benches were installed. Since the benches moved closer to the wall, the wide stairs no longer fit. The upper part may have remained the same because it did not interfere with the installation of the benches.

Based thereon, the second finishing phase of the walls in the anatomical theatre's rotunda coincided with the installation of the benches. Although, based on the current research, it is still unclear why it was necessary to remove (almost) all the earlier plaster, it might explain why the slightly older plaster coat survived where the upper part of the stairs was located. When the large-scale construction work took place in the rotunda, and a large part of the furnishings was replaced, the upper part of the stairs was preserved and the removal of the earlier plaster coat around it was hampered. This helps to explain why a relatively large fragment of the earlier plaster has survived in this area. It is also

33 EAA, 402-5-529, 70–71; EAA, 402-6-289, 205.

34 EAA, 402-5-471, 203.

possible that the ceiling was also rebuilt at this time. And this could be the reason for removing the columns.

It is not known when the stairs were completely demolished or when the opening for the stairs covered up. However, it is clear that this was done after the ceiling was rebuilt. In the course of the research, it turned out that reed mats have been used in the ceiling; and thin wooden strips installed above the staircase opening. The dating of the finishing coat is still unclear, since the research could not ascertain any differences between the former staircase opening and the rest of the ceiling.

However, this still raises the question of why so few finishing coats have been identified in an interior with such a long history – as a result of the probes, only four finishing coats were found in the hollow niches and the wall between them. It is improbable that the interior of the rotunda was left unfinished for an extended period.

In conclusion, based on these discussions, it can be assumed that the surviving plaster fragment (the first finishing phase) dates back to the initial stage of the construction and the second phase (except for the finishing of the ceiling) to the 1850s. The benches, demonstration table and wall cabinet could also date from the late 1850s. Based on the current information, the rostrum dates from the first half of the 19th century and the podium from the second half of the 1920s. The small cabinet apparently dates from the second half of the 19th century.

KRISTIINA TIIDEBERG, HILKKA HIIOP, TIINA VINT, KRISTINA AAS, GRETE NILP, KAISA-PIIA PEDAJAS, HELEN VOLBER: RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN 2014 ON THE INTERIOR FINISHING OF THE ROTUNDA IN THE UNIVERSITY OF TARTU'S OLD ANATOMICAL THEATRE

KEYWORDS: JOHANN WILHELM KRAUSE; KARL AUGUST SENFF; UNIVERSITY OF TARTU'S OLD ANATOMICAL THEATRE; INTERIOR FINISHING RESEARCH; FURNITURE

SUMMARY:

The main objective of the research was to determine if the neoclassical grisaille paintings by K. A. Senff in the rotunda of the Old Anatomical Theatre still existed and to what extent. At the same time, a study of the historical furniture was also conducted.

As a result it can be confirmed that the paintings on the walls or ceilings have not survived and the assumption that they were covered with lime plaster at some point in time has been disproved. The greater part of the room is covered with secondary plaster, which is confirmed by the polychromic plaster fragment that was finished earlier and found in the upper part of the wall, partially covered by the current coved ceiling. The previous research also assumed that the current plaster coat was secondary. And the fact that the current ceiling with the mirrored vault is secondary was also confirmed.

Based on the original plaster fragment that was found, it can be assumed that the **original finishing did not include the niches in the upper part of the walls**, where it has been assumed that the paintings were located. Unfortunately, it is no longer possible to ascertain where the paintings were located and how they were executed. Whether the rotunda's interior was initially finished in a dark, almost black, shade, or was this true only of the upper part of the room; how the paintings in grey tones related to this and how extensive they were unfortunately remain a secret hidden in the obscurity of history. Questions are also raised by the fact that Krause's notes are the only primary sources to provide information about the paintings. One would expect to find other indications of such large-scale and exceptional work (Senff is not known to have created any other monumental paintings) in the archival materials (for instance, in Senff's own materials).

It is still unclear why the initial plaster coat was totally removed and a new coat applied, especially if we consider that it was covered with

paintings. Although these large-scale renovations can be associated with the period between 1856 and 1860 (architect K. Rathaus), when the rotunda's interior was rebuilt and the entire anatomical theatre was expanded, questions are raised by the fact that the current secondary plaster coat has an unexpectedly small number of finishing coats for such long period of time.

Since, the only surviving plaster fragment that presumably dates back to the Krause era is an extremely valuable historical document and forms the basis for future research, it should be exhibited in the room when the interior renovation is completed.

As a result of the research conducted on the finishing coats of the historical furniture, it turned out that the oldest piece of furniture in the current interior is probably the rostrum. However whether or not it dates back to the time when the rotunda was built is still an open question. In the future, its original polychromy should be revealed and exhibited when the planned interior finishing is completed.

Based on the current research, the benches, demonstration table and central section of the wall cabinet can be associated with the reconstruction of the anatomical theatre in the second half of the 1850s. The benches and rostrum have been altered thereafter as needed.

The floor is the only surviving part of the rotunda's interior finishing that can definitely be dated back to the Krause era and it should be preserved during the renovation and thereafter exhibited.

CV:

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Tiina Vint (b. 1975) works as a conservation specialist at the University of Tartu Museum. She has studied ethnology and the conservation of cultural heritage at the University of Tartu. On a daily basis, she deals with problems related to the conservation of physical cultural heritage and making it available to the public. In 2014, she defended her MSc thesis on the use of furniture collection of the University of Tartu outside the museum.