Introduction:

“The birds hunting” is a painting from a turn of 17 and 18 century on a thin oak panel. The wood for the support was cut in Southwest Germany and transported to Flanders, where the panel was created. According to the documentation from 1994, the panel warped into a barrel shape and gained 4 cm high curvature. To reduce it, a thick, stiff beech cradle had been attached to its reverse. The stiff construction blocked the wood’s natural movement and created tension in the panel. The support cracked along the horizontal fixed members, causing 7 splits and damaging all technological layers of the painting. Each of the created elements became to move and deform separately, in its own way. As a result, the visual reception of the painting had been disturbed and both, technological and artistic substance was endangered.

Elaboration of the topic:

With this in view the decision to remove the cradle was made. Process of removing the cradle, the conservation program proposed for the painting was focused on stabilising the structural condition of the panel. The priority was to release the tension in the panel in the least rapid way and allow for the wood's natural movement. Considering the safety of the panel, was gradual. Some of the elements of the cradle were already disjointed and it was them to be removed first. Then, starting from the sides of the panel, parts of the fixed members were cut of to remove the blocked sliding members. Next step, was a gradual removing the outer parts of the fixed members. Each element was removed after one day break, to let the panel adapt to the change of a tension. After removing the cradle, the painting was stabilised in a climate tent and cleaned.

The most difficult step of the conservation treatment was gluing back the disjointed elements. It was performed on the gluing table designed by Jean-Albert Glatigny. The gaps between the elements were filled with mixture of the glue and phenolic microballoons. To support the fillings, small wooden tiles were attached along each crack, using mixture of PVA, sawdust and glass microballoons. The painting gained 28 mm high smooth and align curvature.

Bibliography:

- Kozakiewicz P., Matejak M., Klimat a drewno zabytkowe. Dawna i współczesna wiedza o drewnie, Warszawa 2013