

TURNING POINTS: HISTORIES OF ART HISTORY IN POLAND AND EUROPE

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FACING THE WORK OF ART. MEMORIES OF MY STUDENT YEARS

A former student of art history at the University of Poznań and then a faculty member in its Department of Art History is bound to find a centennial of academic art history in the capital city of Wielkopolska a natural occasion to remember the university milieu that formed his intellectual profile and determined his career. In fact, he has a choice between two ways. First, he can make an attempt to describe that milieu in terms of the history of the discipline and academic teaching, as well as, trying to be impartial, analyze the achievements of the faculty in his student years and define their methods. Second, he may take a look at his university education and the direction of his academic work in the perspective of his own life, in terms of personal memories, knowing of course that those memories will be subjective and partial. I have decided to choose the latter option.

I started attending lectures on art history immediately after passing my high school finals on May 17, 1949, a few months before enrolling at the university. Before the academic year was over, I managed to listen to several ones. Those were the lectures of the Rev. Professor Szczęśny Dettloff on the fifteenth-century Venetian painting. They were delivered in the lecture room of the Department of Art History on the fourth floor of the Collegium Maius. I remember to have understood almost nothing. When later, as a student, I was learning the vocabulary of the discipline, how to analyze the work of art, and – above all – how to evaluate the place of an individual artwork in the artistic process of an epoch, I realized the reasons for my ignorance. My studies made me understand that the perception of the work of art is a human skill of its own kind and that either high school or common elementary education could not, and perhaps still cannot, prepare the young mind for this task. An element of the human encounter with art is inner experience – impressions

that appear independently of the natural propensity of the mind to classify the object perceived and to find its place in the reconstructed past. Still, these impressions are mysteriously related to the intellectual process of searching in the world of art for similarities and their causes – they influence it significantly. That was a discovery of art history as scholarship based on values.

The education offered at that time at the University of Poznań made that aspect quite obvious. Rev. Dettloff, who until March 1953, i.e., almost until my graduation, remained the Chair of the Department as the only faculty member with a professorial degree, and whom we considered the highest authority, was an outstanding analyst of form. I believe that he developed that ability, most likely inborn, during two years which he spent at the University of Munich, attending the lectures of Heinrich Wölfflin. It is through the analysis of form and its vocabulary that the evaluation of the work of art is articulated – this intellectual procedure allows us to place a given work on a great scale of objects that make us forget about reality in admiration. In my freshman year, Rev. Dettloff lectured for four hours a week on the Italian art of the 16th century. Some of that time we spent in the gallery of Italian painting of the Wielkopolskie Museum, today the National Museum in Poznań. Every student was expected to analyze one of the paintings from that collection and briefly present his or her conclusions. Many students were attending that class. Next to us, freshmen, who followed a new program of two-degree studies introduced by the communist authorities, some older colleagues also took Rev. Dettloff's courses. Those were still following the prewar syllabus which was different from ours, with too many lectures of an encyclopedic kind. The first postwar syllabus included mostly courses which immediately familiarized students with the great epochs and names in art history, and consequently with its main methods. That was how Rev. Dettloff understood the function of his classes conducted in the gallery of Italian painting of the Poznań museum. We know that one may find there a number of paintings which can make a good starting point for the study of early modern art.

My task was to analyze *Riva degli Schiavoni* by Luca Carlevarijs. I remember to have worked very hard to describe the painting and collect some information about it, but only after my clumsy presentation, when Rev. Dettloff started making comments, I realized what analysis and interpretation of the work of art could be. Our professor began with a description of the place in Venice represented by the artist, masterfully connecting it with an analysis of the composition and the painterly technique of Carlevarijs. Then he continued, taking several directions: first, he told us about the painter and the topics of his works, then about the artistic milieu and individual artists who influenced him, and finally about his favorite genre – the urban landscape

and its Venetian variant. Listening to Rev. Dettloff, we understood that he led us from the visual characteristics of the painting to the knowledge recorded by human memory, which is something very different from what the sense of sight allows us to identify on the canvas: a small fragment of the outside world. And though we knew nothing or next to nothing about Venice and her painting, the cityscape or perspective, we discovered that only a penetrating insight in the work of art can make one remember one's intellectual resources and relate them to impressions. It was a great lesson of reading the artwork, starting with the analysis of form since Rev. Dettloff had a phenomenal sense of form and its place in the domain of the comparable.

Another opportunity to appreciate Rev. Dettloff's talent came at the end of the same academic year, in May 1950, when all of us, students of art history from Poznań, went for a ten-day study trip to Cracow. Professor Jerzy Szablowski let us take a close look at Wit Stwosz's sculptures of the altarpiece from St. Mary's Basilica. They were stored in a big hall in the south-eastern wing of the administration building of the State Art Collection in the Wawel Castle. They were kept there after their return from Germany since the communist authorities did not agree to place the altarpiece back in the church. That happened some time later, after the political changes which took place after October 1956. Fortunately, while the sculptures were under arrest, a team of specialists with Professor Marian Słonecki could work on their restoration. That not only saved them from destruction by insects feeding on timber, but also let the restorers discover and fix the original polychromy. Since, however, the statues and reliefs were taken out of the retable structure and placed independently all over the storage hall, the whole could not be perceived according to the artist's intention. Stwosz conceived individual elements as parts of bigger compositions, e.g., the central altarpiece or its wings so that the form of each figure could be fully appreciated only in its proper location. Still, starting from the formal analysis of those individual components of the retable and showing us its photos taken before the war, Rev. Dettloff was able to make us imagine the work in all its complexity of relations between particular details and the whole. At the same time, he made us realize how the great sculptor, educated in fifteenth-century Strasburg modeled the human figure.

Rev. Dettloff taught us also how to understand form in the non-representational arts. I can still remember two of his presentations. One was in the post-Jesuit church in Poznań, where he made us see how in the Baroque two sequences of the interior space in architecture (one lengthwise and many transversal) may either contradict each other or come together. The other was in the post-Bernardine church in Sieraków: there Rev. Dettloff showed us how in the first half of the 17th century the forms of the High Renaissance, trans-

formed into decoration, multiplied, and condensed, were separated from their origin in antiquity and, having lost their structural function, became independent elements of a decorated wall, a vault or a cupola.

At that time, a student of art history in Poznań could discover the same kind of sensitivity to have formatted two other professors who were Rev. Dettloff's disciples: Gwidon Chmarzyński and Zdzisław Kępiński.

As we know, Gwidon Chmarzyński did not publish a lot. I remember him mainly as an outstanding teacher who spoke about art with the passion of a critic and a connoisseur. His emotional involvement was the most intense when he talked about the topic he knew best, i.e., the gothic architecture, particularly when we were standing with him outside a gothic church or inside it. Of all the faculty members, Chmarzyński was perhaps the most eager to take part in field trips. Next to Wielkopolska, we traveled with him to Silesia, Pomerania, and the Chełmno region which he liked the most, in particular the co-cathedral church of the Holy Trinity in Chełmża and St. John's church in Toruń. There he could present his approach to gothic architecture most explicitly. The first step was always making a detailed inventory of the elements that make a building stable and express the hidden forces and tensions. But then he could turn with his description this stable world of structure and its external elements into a fascinating picture of living forms. I remember Professor Chmarzyński as one of the top experts on gothic architecture.

Several years ago on another occasion I wrote that our, i.e. students', first encounter with Zdzisław Kępiński made us ask a question about the kind of art history we were going to study when that new faculty member appeared in the Poznań Department of Art History at the beginning of the academic year 1952/1953. The title of a lecture series with which he started his tenure was "The Development of the Realistic Tendency in Art", and we, seniors, were required to listen to it. In those years, the time of uncompromising Stalinism, the words "realism" and "realistic" had only one possible meaning. They were used by the communist party and its ideologues to decide whether art matched whatever they defined as the progress of humanity, i.e., whatever was politically correct, and both terms could qualify both the art of the past and that of the present. Kępiński's first lectures did not make us any less anxious, quite on the contrary. The new professor announced that he would talk about the Trecento painting in Florence, but he began with a comprehensive description of the social, economic, and political situation in the capital city of Tuscany, paying much attention to the great Florentine families, their possessions and the financial operations they were making. Still, when he started talking about the Florentine painting, all that external world suddenly vanished. He focused exclusively on art and what we

heard was excellent analysis of form articulated in a sophisticated manner. The history of commissions and patrons indeed had its place in his narrative, but the works of artists were its core. I am sure that Kępiński's lectures on the Italian painting between the "Black Death" and Masaccio played an important role in my education as art historian. He made me realize the significance of the evolution of forms of representation, so crucial for the European art of that period and place. What was more, he encouraged me to ask questions about the problem of the evolution of forms in general. Later Eugeniusz Krygier told me about the circumstances under which Zdzisław Kępiński saw the Florentine painting for the first time and how that first encounter influenced him. Both of them received a state stipend to go to Italy in 1938: Krygier told me that his companion, fascinated with the city, stayed there much longer than had been planned and that he spent many hours in the Florentine museums, churches, and palaces. After that I had many more opportunities to admire Kępiński's sense of form in art.

I have written so much about our education in the Poznań Department of Art History in the early 1950 because it seems to me that it is my duty to make the reader realize what kind of intellectual formation we received until graduation, before we faced the outside world. I have chosen this term – "facing the world" – on purpose since it conveys an imperative to think on one's own when we must organize our intellectual work without anyone's help. It also refers to quite common situation when, having moved to another academic milieu, we discover a manner of practicing art history that is different from what we are used to. If I were to define that intellectual formation, I would again, like once before, quote Willibald Sauerländer, who described the art history of the first three decades of the 20th century in Germany as "*auf Form oder Gestalt konzentrierte*." He meant art history in Germany but this phrase can be referred also to other countries, including Poland. We know how close Polish art history was to that developed in German-speaking countries, and when I was a student in Poznań our teachers continued the tradition from before the war. Perhaps with one exception, all of them were educated before 1939.

Remembering my student years, I cannot ignore one particular aspect of that period: the obligatory courses introduced by the communist party in 1948/1949 to influence the worldview of the future educated class. "Historical and Dialectic Materialism," "History of the Workers' Movement," "Problems of Contemporary Poland," "Foundations of Marxism-Leninism," and "Political Economy" (I quote the course titles from my student's book) – all those subjects did not play any role in our development. We could see no relation between them and the proper object of our studies. Worse than that – com-

pared with the significance of the problems we considered during classes on art history, history, archaeology, ethnology or logic, taught by our excellent professors, they demonstrated all their intellectual triviality and true function. They were nothing but political propaganda.

October 1956 brought changes in the life of Polish people. We are aware that in terms of global history those local changes in Poland were of little importance. The country was still part of the Soviet empire, with the dictatorship of the communist party. Still, in some aspects of interior politics the difference was crucial: the former paralysis caused by the Stalinist obsession to build a society that would be totally controlled by the party and its ideology was partly gone. Art and art history were those spheres which after the October changes were no longer on the main frontline of the party's ideological offensive. In the 1960s and 1970s the party authorities or individual eager party members would occasionally interfere with the artistic activity of some groups, exhibitions organized by important institutions or publications in the field of art history, but in my opinion their interference did not result from any premeditated political strategy to influence the world of art and art history, being only a reaction to particular events or situations which party leaders and activists refused to tolerate.

I have mentioned the changes in Poland after October 1956 on purpose. My generation experienced the pressure of the communist regime from its young years up to maturity. The cracks that appeared in the system imposed by it – after October they became noticeable – were of crucial importance for us, art historians who just began their academic careers. We could work much more freely and, what was the most important, we could also travel abroad since Poland was no longer hermetically isolated from the Western world. We could take a look at the works of art on site, not just on photographs. Some of us could continue studies at universities abroad, take part in international conferences in other countries, and make direct contacts with outstanding art history scholars, even though it was by no means easy. With few exceptions, all that could happen only when the host institution – a university, a museum, the conference organizers – covered our travel expenses and paid for our room and board. Besides, it must be remembered that not every applicant could get a passport.

I have mentioned the passport policy of the communist Poland to remember the reader that after the years of German occupation and Stalinism Polish art historians could again, in spite of all kinds of obstacles, examine great works of art. The scholars of my generation could at least verify an approach to the art of the Latin Europe as a complex product of a single civilization, adopted in their student years. They could see with their own eyes that the

truly great changes were occurring in the western part of our continent not so often and only in a few milieus whose influences reached regions far away. Having a direct access to the vast areas of European art, they could, as never before, learn how to make a difference between “prior” works and their continuations. On the other hand, they could also better recognize the place of a given artistic achievement on the map of relations and influences in the world of art.

What did it look like in practice? As I have written above, my purpose is to focus on my own experience, but I must add that the experiences of my older and younger colleagues were similar to mine. As it turned out, of all the Western academic centers that welcomed us, Polish historians of medieval art, who were beginning of their careers, the first was the *Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale* in Poitiers, founded in 1953 at the university in that city. Its founder Gaston Berger, a professor of philosophy, admirer of Husserl, and director of the department of higher education in the French Ministry of Education, wanted it to concentrate on research and teaching on the Ph.D. level about the climax of the European Middle Ages: the 10th, 11th, and 12th centuries. His intention was to allow the three main disciplines, i.e., history, art history, and history of literature, as well as others, such as the history of philosophy, science, and music, to keep their specific identity as regards the subject matter and methods. Still, Berger assumed that all of them would come together in the center so that each young medievalist studying there would have an insight in the fields of research other than his or her own to ask questions about the relations between the phenomena and works he or she was interested in and the events, social processes, political systems, spirituality, the arts, and the living conditions in those times.

Today such a methodological postulate in the humanities is taken for granted, but in the 1950s in France, and not only there, a program which was to combine several disciplines in the study of one civilization was innovative. The Poitiers center owed its success to two experienced professors: René Crozet, an art historian who was a disciple of Henri Focillon, and the historian Edmond-René Labande, chosen by Berger to manage it. Besides, he supplied the center with resources, which made it possible to invite to lecture and conduct seminars in Poitiers not only scholars from France, but also other countries. The only requirement was a good command of French, since all the classes were taught in that language. Many foreign scholars met it, as they still often do, which guaranteed that the center hosted, and again, it still does, the most outstanding medievalists from all over the world.

At that time teaching in Poitiers was divided into two cycles: the academic year proper and the summer school which in the early years of the center's

operation lasted for five weeks. The latter was a period of particularly hard work: every morning two professors lectured on two different fields of medieval studies, while in the afternoon there were classes on site, focusing on some local Romanesque and Gothic architectural monuments. On Saturdays, participants went on field trips to nearby cities and towns, and one field trip was organized to visit some more distant region of the Romanesque France. During the academic year teaching was less demanding as it was adjusted to the needs of the young medievalists who came to Poitiers for just a year, usually to work on their own research projects. Still, however, classes were taught, next to the local professors, by scholars from other academic institutions, including many foreigners. When I was studying there, Professor Crozet was working on his book on Romanesque art in Saintonge and in his lectures he presented his progress. Every two weeks he would take us by coach to that district where we were making the inventory of the selected churches while he put under discussion his observations, thus kindly letting us take part in his research. Such a curriculum was continued in Poitiers for a long time, unfortunately to be reduced later. Still, though, its strong point is the participation of many representatives of medieval studies from the whole world, both as teachers and students.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s the *Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale* became for young Polish medievalists the place where they could meet world art history directly, not only in books. They could exchange ideas and opinions – first of all, in seminars, but also in discussions with professors, which followed every lecture during summer schools. Besides, they could gain analytical experience with the greatest examples of medieval art, taking part in many field trips almost all over France. Finally, they could do their own research, having access to a photo archive which held a collection of photographs of the works of the Romanesque art from all over Europe, and use a library with a comprehensive collection of periodicals. Some young Polish scholars came to Poitiers to study for the whole academic year, others just to the summer school, but they were also some who stayed for both cycles. Among the members of my generation, both a little older and younger, those were Zygmunt Świechowski, Lech Kalinowski, Klementyna Żurowska, Stanisław Wiliński, Urszula Popłonyk, Krystyna Józefowicz, Teresa Mroczko, Krystyna Białoskórska, Marian Kutzner, Maria Otto, and Andrzej Tomaszewski.

What kind of art history did those young medievalists study at that time in Poitiers? In France, where since the 18th century writing about art was blooming, it was believed that art was an “autonomous” area of human activity that could be explained as a domain with its specific identity. That approach became particularly distinct in the study of medieval architecture originated in

the 1830s by Arcisse de Caumont. The direction that he took, which resulted in founding a school, was continued by several generations of scholars, including Auguste Choisy, Robert de Lasteyrie, Jean-Auguste Brutails, Camille Enlart, Eugène Lefèvre-Pontalis, Marcel Aubert, Paul Deschamps, and Élie Lambert. Their research was founded on thorough analysis of the building's structure, as well as the analysis of architectural forms of its particular parts, combined with that of the material used for construction. The goal was to reconstruct the internal chronology of that process, which was meticulously compared with its available written records. It should be noted that examining a church or a castle, the French historians of medieval architecture paid much attention to the records which included information about later construction work on a given building. They always did their best to show the difference between its original form and whatever was added to it in the following centuries, being well prepared to read the sources critically. Six continuators of the Count de Caumont were graduates of the excellent *École nationale des Chartes* or graduated from the no less excellent *École Normale Supérieure*, and only one of them, Auguste Choisy, was a *polytechnicien*. The growing amount of information about particular buildings made them ask questions about the place of each of them in the history of architecture defined by the humanities as the history of a genre of art in its own right. Comparisons of horizontal projections and projections of elevations, modes of construction, details, and the ways raw materials were processed in particular works gradually resulted in a comprehensive picture of typological and stylistic groups. Actually, that picture kept changing due to changing and debatable criteria of classification.

Many readers may argue that all that I have described above is nothing but the application of basic methodological requirements of art history and the basic methods of research on architecture. Yes, indeed, but I would have never mentioned on this occasion the French research on medieval architecture, if not for its maximum precision of the analysis of form, articulated in precise language. The French art history has developed a vocabulary that includes terms for even the most complex structure of the work and its elements in all the variety of details. The evolution of that vocabulary has been illustrated by excellent dictionaries of terms, published by Editions du Patrimoine, and among them, as regards architecture, there is a genuine masterpiece of the genre, *Architecture: description et vocabulaire méthodiques* by Marie Pérouse de Montclos (Paris, 1972, new edition 2011).

It should be stressed that the French school of research on medieval architecture has found among the humanities of its country an independent place as far as its methodological status is concerned. Even its name, "*archéolo-*

gie française du moyen âge," dating back to its beginnings, conveys its status quite persuasively. The scholars who constituted that school were gathered in the *Société Française d'Archéologie*, founded by the Count de Caumont in 1834, which has been publishing two top periodicals: a series of the *Congrès Archéologique de France* (since 1834) and a quarterly *Bulletin Monumental* (since 1835). Let me add that the same milieu educated the personnel of the *Service des Monuments Historiques*, a restoration institution also founded at the same time by the de Caumont. I cannot go into details to explain why Arcisse de Caumont chose the term "archaeology" to refer to the study of medieval architecture. Suffice to say that in France this particular term evidently separated the field of research of those who specialized in it from the research on other fields and periods in art history. In fact, a special status of the historians of medieval architecture has been largely preserved until today.

When in 1957, on the occasion of one of the field trips organized during a summer school at the *Centre* in Poitiers, we were standing in front of a Romanesque or a gothic church, listening to Marcel Aubert, an outstanding authority in the world of studies on the medieval architecture of France, author of several monographs of its most important examples and the founder of modern studies on the Cistercian churches and monasteries, his meticulous analysis of the building, articulated in a clear way, revealed the work to us in all the rich variety of its forms. When a few months later we were taking Professor René Crozet's class in Santoigne, we were able, with his assistance, to make attempts to analyze the forms of the local churches on our own. We were learning to understand the work by recognizing its components and their order while the detailed terminology of architecture, developed by French scholarship, allowed us to construct in memory an intellectual edifice of conceptual equivalents of both the building's structure and its elements, since we could distinguish, name, and count all of them. Their size can be articulated in numbers, also it is possible to describe their place in the structure, and measure the distance among them, i.e. verbally express their relations. Written records concerning the history of those churches were taken into consideration only after the beholder's eye recognized the building's artistic identity and internal history and the mind allowed one to put that visual experience into words. For me, a graduate of art history in Poznań, those lessons greatly enhanced my knowledge of the instruments of formal analysis, which I owed to my university. Moreover, they confirmed my belief, also originated in Poznań, that correct analysis of the work's form is an indispensable condition of all the successful intellectual operations in art history.

It may be somewhat surprising that an art historian who does not specialize in architecture, remembers so much about the French studies on this art,

with which he became familiar as a young scholar. The reader may also ask a legitimate question why I have singled out a methodological orientation focused on form, while I appreciated it so highly at the time when art history all over the world and in all its aspects was vigorously trying to reach beyond the emphasis on form toward the domain of ideas. We were very much aware of that shift already then. Many of us, leaving to continue our studies in France, had already read Erwin Panofsky's *Studies in Iconology* or at least knew about his main methodological postulate to find out how a given culture manifests itself in the work of art. I was much impressed by a great vision of Otto von Simson who derived the idea of the gothic cathedral with its many-colored stained glass windows from the metaphysics of light founded upon the writings of Pseudo-Dionysius, worshipped at Saint-Denis, and the Neoplatonism of the cathedral school in Chartres – a group of scholars who believed that a reflection of the universal harmony could be found in mathematics. Analyzing artworks, I also made attempts, even though probably not careful enough, to take into account the ideological message which came to the artist's studio from the outside, with the commission, and which was supposed to be intelligible to the contemporary spectator. The French art history, so dominated by the understanding of artistic activity as an autonomous sphere, could also treat art in terms of the transmission of ideas. In the 19th century, there were two great medievalists who originated studies of the influence of medieval theology, exegesis, and liturgy on art: the Jesuits Charles Cahier and Arthur Martin. Émile Mâle took the same direction and went even farther: assuming direct dependence of the greatest masterpieces of sculpture, painting, and the artistic craftsmanship of the French Middle Ages on the Christian doctrine, he created a monumental picture of the art of that period as an instrument of the pastoral mission of the Catholic Church. This is not a good occasion to compare the method and achievement of Mâle with those of Panofsky; those who may be interested in this question should read Pierre Francastel's *Études de sociologie de l'art* (1970). Still, despite all the differences in their approaches to the object of study, their ways of interpreting art show some similarities. Mâle's influence on art history in his lifetime and after the war was not as wide as that of Panofsky, yet the French scholar had his followers and I met them during my stay in Poitiers. Among them, there was one great medievalist, Focillon's disciple Ludwik Grodecki, who was connected to the *Service des Monuments Historiques* and knew the tradition of the French studies on medieval architecture. His lectures on the twelfth- and thirteenth-century French stained glass windows, which I attended at the *Centre d'Études Médiévales* in 1957, were excellent. Analyzing them, Grodecki demonstrated how the compositions and figural forms included in particular sections of

the windows were combined with the doctrinal message conveyed by them – quite often, it was sophisticated theological discourse. He emphasized the inspiration by Mâle, and footnotes in his publications confirm it. Grodecki was also influenced by Panofsky, who became his intellectual friend when they met in 1949/1950 at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. Finally, when considering the French variety of that kind of art history which assumed direct influence of the world of ideas on art, one cannot ignore the name of André Grabar, a disciple of Nicodem Kondakov and Dmitry Aynalov. There is no doubt that Grabar actually revolutionized the studies on the art of early Christianity, Byzantium, and the countries of the Christian East with two books published in France: *L'empereur dans l'art byzantin. Recherches sur l'art officiel de l'empire d'Orient* (1936) and *Martyrium. Recherches sur le culte des reliques et l'art chrétien antique* (1946). His comprehensive view of the ideological and social factors which influenced the great artistic centers of the Greek East had its impact also on research on the art of the West. His pioneering study of the representations of the Eastern-Roman Emperor significantly inspired those who after the war worked on the political iconography in the countries of Latin culture. I listened to Grabar's lectures at the *Collège de France* and had the privilege to meet him and talk to him longer several times. The way in which he spoke and wrote about the reflection of the Greek world in the art of the Eastern Empire of late antiquity and the Middle Ages was absolutely unique.

Let me repeat once more that when I was studying in France the great current in art history, as varied as it is, that treats art as expression of ideas was already well known to my generation. However, whenever I was standing in front of a Romanesque or gothic church and started analyzing its architecture, the questions asked by that current suddenly disappeared. I was interested in something else. Directed by my professors, I discovered the building as a separate, self-contained universe of forms, as well as a set of elements combined together by its internal order into an organic whole. My guides, familiar with a complex, detailed terminology, precisely distinguished and named each element, from the smallest to the largest, and equally precisely described the relations among them. Their lessons were exercises in the analysis of form, at the same time demonstrating how to translate the visual into words. If I may use a metaphor, it was that kind of art history which really "clung" to the artwork. Surely, I knew then and I know now that the knowledge of medieval churches, which my French teachers shared with me, was limited to its proper objects. The methods of analyzing architecture cannot be applied to the study of representational arts, but all those hours taught a young art historian how important a careful formal analysis is and how responsible one

is for the words used to deal with art at any level: in description, analysis, and interpretation. Studying medieval churches in France, we were mastering morphological analysis developed throughout many decades of meticulous research. That analysis, articulated with a precise vocabulary, was an intellectual challenge. Thanks to the attention paid to details, the analyses of different churches taught us how to approach every one of them as a unique work of art, and the ability to recognize the uniqueness of an individual artwork is the key to understand art as such and a measure of our success. But this is quite another issue while it is time for me to finish now.

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Summary

The present essay includes the author's memories of his university studies and the intellectual formation that he received as a student of art history at the University of Poznań in 1949-1954. His first professor who opened to him the door to art history and exerted on him a strong intellectual influence, was Szczęśny Dettloff, a disciple of Heinrich Wölfflin in Munich and Max Dvořák in Vienna. Dettloff taught his students that the foundation of studying art in history is the study of the form of an individual artwork. He believed that without a proper analysis of form it is impossible to construct appropriate series of the works of art and specify their position in the culture of the times of their origin. Similar sensitivity to form and the understanding of its significance for the art historian's work were represented by two other professors important for the author, both educated by Dettloff already before World War II: Gwido Chmarzyński and Zdzisław Kępiński. When in 1957-1968 the author was a postgraduate student in the *Centre d'Études Supérieures de Civilisation Médiévale* at the University of Poitiers (*CÉSCM*), it turned out that the local methodological tradition was similar to what he had learned in Poznań before. The *CÉSCM* was founded as a multidisciplinary institute for the study of the Middle Ages, combining history, art history, literary history, and the history of ideas. It was important that one of them could shed light on an object studied by another, but each of them, including art history, kept its material and methodological identity. In the French tradition, art history had an "autonomous" status, focusing on artistic creation as a special sphere of human activity. That idea influenced also quite strongly the study of medieval architecture, originated in the early 19th century by Arcisse de Caumont, and continued until today by many generations of French scholars. What is characteristic of their research is meticulous analysis of form, articulated with a precise, detailed, and comprehensive specialist vocabulary. The lectures of French scholars on medieval architecture, which

the author attended in Paris and Poitiers, taught him precision in the analysis of the artwork's structure and its components, as well as responsibility for every single statement made on art. For a young art historian who did not specialize in architecture but in representational arts, that French experience was a lesson of methodological rigor necessary in the intellectual pursuits of the humanities scholar.

Keywords:

University of Poznań – art history, University of Poitiers – art history, methodology of art history, art history around 1950