

6 *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* (Art: A Survey of Its History, 1872)

The Disciplinary and Political Context of Józef Łepkowski's Survey of Art History

Magdalena Kunińska

Intersecting Histories in Constructing the Unity of Central European Nations

The mechanisms of structuring art history survey textbooks can be viewed as signs of the times within the discipline's development. In the nineteenth century, such textbooks, as Mitchell Schwarzer argues, 'embodied the vision of history to unify the art of the past into a coherent and relevant story for the present'.¹ This chapter refers to *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów; zarazem podręcznik dla uczących się i przewodnik dla podróżujących* (Art: A Survey of Its History; A Textbook for Students as well as a Guide for Travellers), published in 1872 by Józef Łepkowski, who had been appointed as the head of Poland's first archaeology department at the Jagiellonian University, Kraków, in 1866. Łepkowski's textbook is a good starting point both for the investigation of narrative strategies and historical assumptions and as a key moment in the history of the discipline in Poland.

Throughout his career, Łepkowski adopted the strategy of transferring or 'autonomously translating' the methodological and substantive achievements of Western art history and placing them in the Polish context. It seems that one of his chief goals was to reposition Polish art within the rewritten universal history, extending the area previously covered by German research. Meanwhile, early art history in Poland pursued two main ends: on the one hand, to demonstrate the distinctive and unique characteristics of Polish art and thereby prove the autonomous status of the Polish nation;² on the other hand, to preserve its kinship with Western Europe. In the contemporary language of the Hegelian philosophy of history, Western Europe was classified as the 'dominant' civilization – although Daniel Preziosi has described it scathingly as the 'brain of the Earth's body'.³ Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is no exception to this. The author divided the development of art into broadly defined periods, whose rhythm was marked by stylistic changes. This approach was somewhat problematic, making it especially difficult to appropriately position Islamic, Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, among others. Thus, Łepkowski shared the perspective of the German *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte* (general art history) textbooks by Karl Schnaase, Franz Kugler, Anton Springer and Wilhelm Lübke, which served as his main reference points. More importantly, his work was the first and only survey of its kind: the next generation of academic art historians rejected survey texts in favour of monographs on individual monuments which, moreover, were limited mainly to Polish examples. The first of these was the 1876 monograph on the ruins at Ostrów Lednicki by Marian Sokołowski, who

would enjoy a brilliant career as Poland's first professor of art history.⁴ The publishing of Łepkowski's survey marked an important stage compared to the previous period in Poland, which was dominated mainly by the Hegelian philosophy of art history propagated by Józef Kremer, as well as by the attempts of patriotically oriented amateurs such as Franciszek Sobieszczanski and Józef Kraszewski. That said, a reflection on *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* may shed new light on the history of 'entangled' art history, as well as on methods of conducting historical research into art.

The nineteenth century, and particularly its second half (in the case of the Habsburg Empire, after 1867), has been described by József Sisa as the period of discovering 'the lost Centre',⁵ with 'exponents of universal or museum-based art history [being] unanimous in their assertion that there was no such thing as the development of a separate Hungarian ([Polish], Danish, French, Romanian, or any other "national") style'.⁶ The 'discourses and strategies' of that period, as Jan Bakoš describes them,⁷ have been the subject of extensive discussions in the last 20 years.

Survey textbooks can be treated as one of the media used to create the 'imagined community'⁸ of a nation, in a similar fashion to the recently analysed institutional and social role of museums and their 'age'. The authors of two volumes dedicated to the latter topic – Matthew Rampley, Markian Prokopovych and Nóra Veszprémi – assume that a construed unity of the arts (and of a nation) functions above and alongside class and gender divisions, thus emphasizing their role in unifying the nation.⁹ Łepkowski's textbook, published by the candidly named Wydawnictwo Dziel Tanich i Pożytecznych (The Publishing House of Cheap and Useful Works), focused on educational tenets and addressed a wide audience:

I shall not speak of contemporary artists, whether foreign or Polish. In my selection of 104 wood engravings to illustrate the discussion, I avoided nudity for the sake of the educational merits of the book; for the same reason, when listing paintings and sculptures in the text, I omitted those that portray gross sensuality or offensive salaciousness.¹⁰

Following in the footsteps of Anton Springer's vastly popular *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte: Zum Gebrauche für Künstler und Studierende und als Führer auf der Reise* (Handbook of Art History: For Use by Artists and Students and as a Travel Guide; 1855), Łepkowski propagated a specific way of approaching art, advising his reader to travel to places covered by the book and included in the 'List of locations where valuable monuments are situated (this list can be used as a guide during travels with the purpose of viewing relics of art)'.¹¹ This entertainment-oriented aspect of culture and national heritage is something that attracts ever greater interest today. Rampley has discussed how, with the exception of narratives imposed by museum displays, audiences created their own alternative modes of perception.¹²

Surprisingly, the titles of most of the works dedicated to the aforementioned topics include wording that emphasizes agency, activity or inventiveness: from *Motherland and Progress*,¹³ *La fabrique de l'art nationale* (The Factory of National Art)¹⁴ and 'Writing and Displaying Nations',¹⁵ through *Manufacturing Middle Ages*,¹⁶ to searching for the genesis of art history in *Les invasions barbares* (Barbarian Invasions),¹⁷ this tendency is consistent across the European intellectual field. It is no accident that this chapter opens Part III of this volume titled 'Our Art Is in Textbooks'. It will begin by reflecting on the nature of how we read textbooks, as well as on the central notions

which in the last 25 years have shifted from geographical concepts, that generally question the centre–periphery model, towards research into the temporal models present in historiographic narrations, as well as into the constructed nature of periodization in the history of art. This part of the book also features discussions of ways in which Poland drifted towards the West, modes of periodization in the history of Estonian architecture¹⁸ and the difficult heritage of Croatia,¹⁹ offering a range of examples of coexisting competitive discourses about monuments.

The aforementioned countries built their national identity on a couple of easily noticeable mechanisms: self-Easternization and self-Westernization. Scientific exchange was subject to the same mechanisms: from the asymmetrical influence of academic centres dominated by Germany and France, which maintained ‘peripheral’ narrations, to more diffuse contact networks between scholars, which merit investigation according to the network model suggested by, for example, Lucila Mallart-Romero, which maps direct exchange and the spread of thought.²⁰ Łepkowski consciously refers to the asymmetrical relationship arising from the sources of thought he selected.

A Few General Remarks on Reading Survey Textbooks: The Problem with Universality

Neither in knowledge nor in reflection can anything whole be put together, since in the former the internal is missing and in the latter the external; and so we must necessarily think of science as art if we expect to derive any kind of wholeness from it. Nor should we look for this in the general, the excessive, but, since art is always wholly represented in every individual work of art, so science ought to reveal itself completely in every individual object treated.²¹

Taking these words from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Materialien zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*²² (Materials on the History of Colour Theory, 1810) as a motto for his critical prologue on epistemology written in the 1920s, Walter Benjamin goes on to argue:

The value of fragments of thought is all the greater the less direct their relationship to the underlying idea, and the brilliance of the representation depends as much on this value as the brilliance of the mosaic does on the quality of the glass paste. The relationship between the minute precision of the work and the proportions of the sculptural or intellectual whole demonstrates that truth content is only to be grasped through immersion in the most minute details of subject-matter. In their supreme, western, form the mosaic and the treatise are products of the Middle Ages; it is their very real affinity which makes comparison possible.²³

It has been 25 years since the structure of survey texts on art history, such as Horst Waldemar Janson’s *History of Art* (1962),²⁴ was questioned by Robert Nelson and others.²⁵ Nelson was writing at a time of critical reflection on the beginnings of the discipline, which took place in the postmodern and postcolonial period. It became obvious that the previous model was strongly Western and, more generally, that investigating the past is never neutral, as it always serves non-scientific (e.g. political, nationalist) ends. The history of surveys dates back to the middle of the nineteenth

century in Germany, when survey texts (by Kugler, Schnaase and most popularly by Lübke and Springer) were the crowning achievement of the so-called *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte*. The struggle to define a new paradigm offered a good opportunity to present the strategies and mechanisms of those texts. Nelson presents the methods of evaluating and positioning Byzantine art in the nineteenth century as a good example of the general paradigm practice of art history. He does not address a specific critical strategy, but rather pictures ‘the deepest structures’²⁶ organizing knowledge, the ‘taxonomy to which we have adjusted our courses, our research’. Because ‘we have been satisfied to work within the paradigm, we have rarely questioned its limits or the processes of organizing and controlling knowledge’.²⁷ In the wake of Michel Foucault, archaeology has attempted to trace the notions lying ‘on the level of disciplinary unconsciousness’.²⁸ A second aspect of disciplinary discourse was addressed by Mitchell Schwarzer, who demonstrated the mechanisms and strategies of general surveys of the history of art.²⁹

Nelson’s voice is part of the American discussion on the new ways of investigating art history, which yielded a special issue of the *Art Journal* in 1995.³⁰ Dedicated to teaching general art history, the entire issue, as well as its introductory essay, shared the same title: *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*. The vast phenomenon of the emergence of such structures of survey textbooks and debates on decolonization crushed the mechanisms behind the unquestionable monolith of Western art. We are currently witnessing a shift in art historical research towards the global, also covering such matters as the artist–user/recipient relationship.

The hegemony of the German cultural and historical view of art as an expression of historical forces is being rejected in historiography. Left-oriented researchers exploited the concepts created by Foucault to the extent that they were accused of blindly following his model in their analyses. However, as demonstrated by the Polish case and by research into conceptualization of the national discourse in Hungary conducted by, among others, Edit András,³¹ critical analysis of existing art history narratives in Central and Eastern Europe is still a thriving research topic.

Chronos and Aion

A worldwide discussion of disciplinary models was a fruitful moment for the analysis and archaeology of research and its ‘ancestors’, the forerunners of which were Foucault with his *The Order of Things* (1966) and, of course, Jorge Luis Borges and the map – territory metaphor used in ‘fiction’ under the title ‘On Exactitude in Science’. Here we read:

In that Empire, the craft of Cartography attained such Perfection that the Map of a Single province covered the space of an entire City, and the Map of the Empire itself an entire Province. In the course of Time, these Extensive maps were found somehow wanting, and so the College of Cartographers evolved a Map of the Empire that was of the same Scale as the Empire and that coincided with it point for point.³²

Simultaneously, poststructuralist critique was a starting point for the analysis of textbooks and surveys treated as belonging to a specific *genre*. As described by Dan Karholm, they used from the very beginning ‘the art of [creating] illusion’.³³ When discussing

the first published art historical survey by Franz Kugler,³⁴ Karlholm defines a certain discourse practice and, at the same time, the result of a semiotic practice. These strategies and structures, whatever they may be called, are a part of art history. The focus on tracing naturalized rationales for creating a world map of art led to a variety of suggestions. A first group of these questioned the existing Eurocentric and Western-centric model. A second strove to widen the range of art to be exhibited and analysed. A third model was Thomas DaCosta Kaufmann's concept of the geography of art history, underpinned by a materialist rationale,³⁵ which resulted in works on the circulation of objects³⁶ and the digital mapping strategies put forward by the 'Artl@s' project.³⁷ These scholarly endeavours also stemmed from a materialist, 'agential' approach.

Currently, the discourse tends to focus on temporality, which appears, among others, in works by Keith Moxey. In his 2013 volume *Visual Time*, Moxey states:

The thrust of my argument, addressed at the current shape of art history, has been fuelled by a growing awareness of the provincialism of its Eurocentric bias. This awareness prompted me to pursue the idea that heterochrony might be a way of articulating resistance to a subscription to a 'universal' form of time.³⁸

Disappointed with the current situation, Moxey poses general questions: 'Where and when is the time of the history of art? . . . What are the prospects for a world or a global art history in circumstances that recognize the incommensurability of different national and cultural traditions?'³⁹ Significantly, precursors of this renewed art history paradigm included Aby Warburg and Walter Benjamin. Matthew Rampley has recently demonstrated that Warburg was the sole historical figure of significance for the discipline, as an inspiration for attempts to break through existing structures.⁴⁰ Nowadays, attempts to question the structure of historical knowledge and Warburg's legacy are approached from the viewpoint of temporality and its modes of time, and the focus is on anachronic or hetero-temporal models.

Georges Didi-Huberman, tirelessly shattering the 'Kantian cage' of rationally structured art history, pointed this out in the subtitle of *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms; Aby Warburg's History of Art* (2016) as well as in *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science* (2018; 2021 in Polish). We should bear in mind, however, that the concept of Chronos was combined with a naturalized concept of style. As Willibald Sauerländer wrote in his 1983 essay 'From Stilis to Style', connecting the concept of style with a specific concept of time

brought this evolution to its climax. But let us once more recall: there is one fateful turning-point in this long process, the moment when in the age of Enlightenment style was linked with the idea of periodization, evolution, progress. Needless to repeat it was only then that the notion of style was changed from an instrument for art appreciation or better art theory into a tool for art history. Art history could never have come to life without this fateful interconnection of Stilis and Chronos. The whole system of our discipline has been erected on this crossroad of style and time by an ever growing accumulation of comparative material. And yet it is just in this fateful encounter with time that the notion of style is only too easily transformed from an instrument of description, classification, and rational understanding into a medium of revelation, that it can become a kind of spirit, which acts before the fascinated regard of the art-historical public on the stage of history.⁴¹

Didi-Huberman, in turn, offered an analysis of the atlas from the perspective of differed temporality; based on conclusions drawn from the Babylonian hepatoscopy model shown on the first chart, he pictured the art history model practised by Warburg as a section, a cut in the traditional education model existing in Germany, encapsulating the history of art in a smooth line of successive stylistic changes (it is hard to resist the temptation to evoke James Elkins's title *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*). By suggesting a new heuristic strategy – variable non-petrified tables of relations connecting to form constellations – Warburg proposed a new model of temporality. As noted by Didi-Huberman, a crucial point in Aby Warburg's evaluation of art history as a science is his concept of 'the distributions of time (where the archaeological point of view disassembles the chronological certitudes) and, finally, the units of representation (since, in both cases, it is the tableau classique that will be shaken to its foundations)'.⁴² He also emphasizes the breakdown of the existing framework, referring to the 'birthplace' of Foucault's thought – the fiction of Borges:

This book [*Les mots et les choses*, or *The Order of Things* in English] first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography, while breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things, and continuing long afterwards to disturb and threaten with collapse our age-old distinction between the Same and the Other.⁴³

Moreover, Didi-Huberman's analysis does more than to point out the constructionally and historically conditioned structure of knowledge; using Gilles Deleuze's and Félix Guattari's rootstock concept, he also notices underground presuppositions which are decisive for this structure but live in a different, uncountable time dimension. According to Deleuze, classical art history is bound to Chronos (let us remember Sauerländer here).

Concepts of Art and Temporality in Józef Łepkowski's Survey

As a way of linking the reading of Łepkowski's work into the analysis of existing temporalities, I suggest starting from the Halbwachsian concept of remembrance, understood as 'a reconstruction of the past achieved with data borrowed from the present, a reconstruction prepared, furthermore, by reconstruction of earlier periods wherein past images had already been altered'.⁴⁴ It is a concept also used by Moxey, as well as in Susanne Stewart's analysis of poetic works.⁴⁵ In his 1847 book *Starożytności i pomniki Krakowa* (Antiques and Monuments of Kraków), Łepkowski writes:

A grey-haired old man looks over his shoulder, he reminisces about the memories of feelings lingering as souvenirs recalled from his youth; enlivened by youthful ardour, he is happy to revive past images in his memory. Even the remembrance of the suffering he endured fills him with sweet delight. If our past is so dear to us today, with what diligence and zeal should we preserve memories left to us by our ancestors! Moreover, any enlightened nation would value them greatly, not only as memories, but as relics of art.⁴⁶

Łepkowski noticeably emphasizes the emotionality of looking back. Recalling memories of art gives them voice, as the concept of monuments speaking the specific language

of a witness to history is already present in the tale of a nation's life story and very well established in historiography. In his case, it is accompanied by the following motto: 'New buildings say nothing. Ruins – they speak'.⁴⁷

As mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is a good starting point from which to analyse historical discourse about art as it was conducted in Poland in the past. It reveals narrative strategies and historical assumptions made by Łepkowski, while also serving as a point of reference for the history of the discipline in Poland. Throughout his career, Łepkowski assumed the specific strategy of transferring or 'autonomously translating' the methodological and factual achievements of Western art history to Polish art; in a broader sense, this can be described as an auto-colonizing discourse. The sources are easy to recognize and the author lists them at the beginning of his survey:

This book of mine can be put into the hand of a young boy or girl. It is a primer for the attributes and history of art, written for the first time in the Polish language. It could, perhaps, fulfil any and all requirements if, continuously updated, it were to be republished more than a dozen times (like the German textbook by Lübke). The first editions of works by Otte, Springer or Lübke, published 17 years ago, can be deemed insignificant in view of today's editions of the same books.⁴⁸

It seems that one of Łepkowski's main goals was to place Polish art within the newly written universal art history and to extend the area previously covered by German research; as demonstrated by Matthew Rampley, this was a strategy typical of the time.⁴⁹ Łepkowski's intention recalls the work of Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg who, at the very beginning of his scholarly career, embarked on a project to research the areas of Austrian-Hungary Empire that had not been dealt with in Franz Kugler's textbook. Łepkowski's research strategy is outlined in a letter to Edward Rastawiecki, dated 16 September 1850, which he wrote after the publication of the first volume of Rastawiecki's *Słownik malarzów polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających* (Dictionary of Polish Painters and Foreigners Who Have Settled in Poland or Stayed Temporarily; 1850).⁵⁰ Łepkowski thanks Rastawiecki for a reference and for sending him his book; in his opinion, the topic is too short in some places, but he acknowledges that 'it is we, the boring archaeologists, who cherish the many details and minutiae, which may not perhaps suit the taste of a general audience'.⁵¹

Creating a textbook in which carefully selected Polish monuments are 'added' to the general history of art was an act of political involvement. The early history of Polish art committed itself to the double task of demonstrating the distinctive and unique character of the country's art, thus proving the autonomous status of the nation, but still preserving its relationship with Western Europe. Creating a survey also requires pursuing a specific path within the philosophy of history, as well as implementing a chosen concept of periodization for the history of art. Łepkowski's *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* is not an exception to this. The author constructs art history, dividing it into the two most generally defined periods of development: the Christian and the pre-Christian period. Each of these general periods is then in turn periodized according to the rhythm of stylistic changes. In Łepkowski's time, the assumptions of art history, more or less openly referring to Hegelian philosophy, were already naturalized to a large extent. Łepkowski's language refers to the history of style as a presentation of spiritual development without the need for additional justification. Łepkowski's

choice of the Hegelian paradigm came from his exposure to the writings and lectures of the influential philosopher and aesthetician Józef Kremer, who brought the structure of Hegelian historiosophy to Poland. Łepkowski thus defines art history as an organizing strategy:

The history of the fine arts is related to aesthetics in the same way as, for example, natural history is related to physiology. It organizes works of art according to external qualities; it classifies and arranges them according to ages or nations – and then it aligns them according to certain prominent features or attributes (styles), which it calls schools. Descriptions of masterpieces of art, lives of artists, motions, courses, ways, directions which the arts followed also belong to the history of fine art – whereas the very countenance of art, the eternal thought emanating from it, is the subject of the philosophy of fine art.⁵²

Further on he writes:

As regards the distribution and division of the fine arts, they, or rather their philosophy, are distributed or divided by those who think and write about them. Some base their division on the material through which art presents itself, dividing it into plastic and ideal arts. The former comprise architecture, sculpture, and painting, which embody their thought in tangible materials. The ideal arts include music, poetry, and rhetoric, because their thread and material are voice and tone. It is here that thought masters the material and conquers it entirely; independent of it, it has it under its full power. Instead of material, others divided fine arts according to whether they manifest themselves in space or in time. Lamennais derived his division from the unity of God. Hegel puts symbolic arts first, where the spirit has not yet combined its thought with the material, but still it looms over it – where the work of art exists.⁵³

Finally, Łepkowski identifies directly with Hegelian thought. Hegel's philosophy, which underpinned most art historical discourse in the nineteenth century, derived its periodization schema from the teleological notion of *Geist* (spirit). In his lectures on aesthetics, Hegel naturalized the periodization of the symbolic, classic and romantic (or Christian) eras.⁵⁴ In this context, we read in Łepkowski's work:

At that time, art was merely a symbol of thought. This was the character of the arts of Egypt and of the Eastern peoples. In the second stage of the development of the spirit, it comprised classical arts – an absolute connection, a union, a fusion of thought and material, the most beautiful harmony of both form and content, the idea of beauty made real. Such were the fine arts of the Greeks. . . . Finally, the third and highest level to which the fine arts have risen is called romantic art. In the combined harmony of the classical arts, thought drowned in the material; romantic art, on the other hand, evokes thought: thought rules material and masters it, and works of art are dominated by spirituality. This form of art was prepared by Christianity and the age of the knights. Thus, according to Hegel, every single art form went through, and developed within, these three positions: symbolism, classicism and romanticism.

Łepkowski places architecture at the centre of his thinking, which is also typical of his time: 'Architecture is always symbolic, as it is the dwelling place of the spirit; sculpture is classical, as it is the harmony of matter and spirit; painting, music and poetry are romantic, as they are dominated by spirituality'. This approach allows Łepkowski to justify the assumed periodization model: 'A more comprehensible division, however, seems to be the distribution of particular arts and of their development in time'. He divides them as follows:

Architecture is the shield, the shell, the bedrock in which thought is sealed; from there, the human figure is yet to emerge. Sculpture is a manufactured figure of man, but it is still cold. Painting warms the figure up with colours and endows it with warmth and life. . . . This is the first heavenly call of beauty which is incorporated into life itself.⁵⁵

Łepkowski's approach is accompanied by an organic concept of style, which he defines as follows: 'The same secular stylistic attributes were conveyed through all details, the slightest device, the attire, even the crafted article'.⁵⁶

One of the most important aspects of the creation of 'national' narratives in the history of Central European art was reference to medieval ideals. Michela Passini, in *La fabrique de l'art national: Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne, 1870–1933* (The Factory of National Art: Nationalism and the Origins of History of Art in France and Germany, 1870–1933; 2012), has discussed how the search for ideal models in local variants of the Gothic and, in particular, in the Romanesque style was a reaction to the hegemony of post-Napoleonic French discourse in Classical art. Łepkowski addresses the Romanesque style as follows:

The Romanesque style emerged in the West from the shoot of early Roman Christianity; it was nurtured by the Christian way of life that developed in the Middle Ages. The characteristics of this architecture were influenced by the different directions taken by various nations. It is called Romanesque due to its source, in a similar way to our naming of languages that derive from Latin. This style was cultivated from the end of the tenth century (almost since 1000 AD) to nearly the middle of the thirteenth century by all Roman Catholic nations. The clergy, in particular brotherhoods of monks, developed the Romanesque manner of building. This was sometimes called 'round-arched', since the round-headed arch was one of its characteristic features.⁵⁷

Research into local Romanesque styles accorded well with the institutional interests of art history in the Habsburg Empire, especially in the work of Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg, who, as early as 1856, pointed out how the Romanesque style differed from the Byzantine.⁵⁸ The frustration caused by the 1848 Spring of Nations, combined with Czech resentment towards imperial policies, meant that research into the medieval architecture of Bohemia actually took place in Hungary in the 1850s, led by the Austrian Institute of Historical Research. But the phenomenon was happening across the whole of Europe; in Catalonia, for example, Josep Puig i Cadafalch was still working on the local Romanesque architecture at the start of the twentieth century. In Poland, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz strove to win recognition for Romanesque art within the

European landscape, while a few years later, Marian Sokołowski's research into the Romanesque style would focus on the Ruthenian 'close other'.

The struggle to create a Polish (i.e. European, in light of the German-centric character of the early years of the discipline) identity led to the rejection and exoticization of non-European art. While a contemporary evaluation of this strategy might associate it with the phenomenon of orientalism as defined by Edward Said, we should be careful when expressing such evaluations if we understand orientalism as 'the strategy of helping the West in defining itself by constructing an Other whose features were understood as the opposite of the West'.⁵⁹ Moreover, the political context of divided Poland reveals questions around defining a nation that were typical of this period. In this context, Łepkowski could be said to presage the perspective later described by Larry Wolff in *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment* (1994; published in Polish in 2020), as well as the approach of Pheng Cheah, who investigates the unstable opposition between the national and the global from a historical perspective in *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (2015).

General Assumptions About the Character of Art and Counter-Periodization

Józef Łepkowski defines art as an autonomous unity manifesting itself in history, which

like the sun, illuminated with its midday radiance everything it could reach with its influence. Thus, the intricate decoration of a woman's gown, a tool, an iron fitting or a grate all could and can be marked with art, just as a person's character can be marked with style. Hence we meet the cradles of art in the results of archaeological research at the graves of peoples from the most distant past. Fine art used any and all materials – and the spirit sought ideas in the stars of the sky, the calicles of flowers, the colours of butterflies' wings, and in the world of all creatures – creating beauty in sculpture, in painting, and above all in architecture (which encompasses sculpture and painting and is filled with them).⁶⁰

Łepkowski defines periods of stylistic development according to deep-rooted biological metaphors, such as 'new-born' or the 'initial', 'mature' and 'final' stage. Sometimes this results in problems with the proper positioning of art forms: for example, Islamic art is treated as an interlude within, or even as a deviation from, the 'correct' path. This is one of the moments where the borrowed forms of Western periodization show their inadequacy:

Although we are talking about Christian styles, we shall pause our disquisition here to go off course and mention Islamic architecture, describing how it was developed by Muslim peoples. This pause is justified for the sake of contemporaneity, as the style began to develop from the eighth century onwards. Ultimately, it is difficult to omit, since the influence of motifs of the Early Christian and Byzantine style in particular can be noticed in these buildings. Christian baptism worked here as well [Łepkowski thus shows the influence of Christianity] and put its stamp on this art.⁶¹

Here, Łepkowski, a Catholic believer, refers directly to the doctrine of Hugues-Félicité-Robert de Lamennais (1782–1854) which was popular throughout Europe and advocated a common rational sense present in Christianity.

The second typical break in the rhythm of successive periods marked by stylistic changes is that of Byzantine and post-Byzantine art, which seem to be frozen in time. Łepkowski emphasizes this through a rhetoric derived from the philosophical geography of the world developed by Hegel and Jacob Burckhardt⁶²:

[Their art was] bound by prescriptions, a rather assumed custom, a necessary time-honoured form. Hence the silhouettes of saints, in paintings or in mosaics, are stiff and silent, frozen into one hieratic form for ages past. In spite of the gold and the azure, the deathliness of the mummies hits the viewer in the eye. They are flashy figures who have freed themselves from their earthly bonds. Thus, they are not surrounded by bushes or flowers, nor are they standing against a background of mountains or beautiful nature. Instead, those incapable of the true art that conjoins heaven and earth dressed them with gems. This art was brought to us with the Greek rites, so we can observe its characteristics even in Wawel Castle in paintings from the vault of the Jagiellonian chapel, also known as the Chapel of the Holy Cross.⁶³

This passage makes clear the prejudices then present in Polish art historiography. Łepkowski's first-hand experience of this chapel forced him somehow to explain this 'Byzantine' art. Deliberately overlooking how it hybridized with Gothic architecture, he insisted on separating it from 'proper' Polish art, understood as belonging to the Western tradition. This is a view which Łepkowski shared with the so-called *allgemeine Kunstgeschichte* (general art history) textbooks: Schnaase, Kugler, Springer and Lübke remain the reference points for the first and only Polish survey of this kind.

The final example which does not fit into standard categories of periodization for Łepkowski is wooden architecture, which he inscribes into the material and nature-based heritage of the nation, again with direct reference to the ideas of Schnaase and Lübke. Łepkowski treats this kind of architecture as existing outside the general rhythm of periodization, highlighting instead its local distinctiveness:

We have our own terminology for carpentry. It seems that the very nature of our country put an axe into the hands of the builders of our homes and churches. At the moment when nature endowed nations with climate, colour and richness, other peoples were given hotter skies and their lands were blessed with gold and precious stones; we, on the other hand, were given lead-coloured clouds. . . . This character of our land and the historical direction of our nation probably led to the distinctive characteristics of our art relics.⁶⁴

Conclusion

The generation of institutionally trained art historians who followed Łepkowski abandoned the survey approach in favour of monographs on individual monuments. Łepkowski's work remains a document of the discipline's history: published in 1872, at a time when German surveys enjoyed vast popularity and multiple editions, it was an important stage in the discipline's development in Poland, compared to the previous

period which had been dominated mainly by the Hegelian approach to art history propagated by Józef Kremer, as well as by the attempts of patriotically oriented amateurs such as Franciszek Sobieszcański or Józef Kraszewski. A year after Łepkowski's book, the first Congress of Art Historians gathered in Vienna and, as articulated in a letter sent by Karl Schnaase to its participants, attempted to define the tasks of the discipline and to go beyond the old model of 'general art history'.⁶⁵

Reflecting on *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów* can shed new light on the history of the convoluted methods and manners of conducting historical research on art. The book opens the door to critical reconstruction of auto-colonizing discourses in the history of style, discourses which attempted to fit in with the general periodization schema of Western art. In so doing, it simultaneously excluded a major part of the region's legacy from art history, in a work written from a Catholic rather than from a Christian point of view.

After the First World War, newly independent countries in East Central Europe made efforts to codify their national heritage – with more or less express or explicit premises. Polish examples of this include Michał Walicki and Stefan Starzyński's study *Dzieje sztuki polskiej* (The History of Polish Art, 1934). They attempted to synthesize art from across the lands of the newly established country in a unified, transparent way, all the while maintaining a guarded approach towards the art of minorities. In so doing, they created new fields for 'histoires croisées', in the terminology of Werner and Zimmermann.

Notes

- 1 Schwarzer, 'Origins of the Art History Survey Text', 24.
- 2 'Nation' is understood here as defined initially by Johann Gottfried von Herder and later elaborated in Alain Finkielkraut's concept of the intra-national genesis of shared value systems. On Herder's concept of nation, see Barnard, *Herder on Nationality*, esp. 38–64. For the first formulation of a concept of nation united by Volksgeist, see Herder, *Auf eine Philosophie der Geschichte*. See also Finkielkraut, *The Undoing of Thought*, 12. For the relationship between the general concept of 'nation' and attempts to create 'national styles', see, for example, Moravánszky, 'Searching for the National Styles', esp. 241–42.
- 3 See the title of the collected Slade Lectures: Preziosi, *Brain of the Earth's Body*. Preziosi's concept is also addressed by Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*.
- 4 Sokołowski, *Ruiny na Ostrowie Jeziora Lednicy*; for Sokołowski's research, see Kunińska, *Historia sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*; in English: Kunińska, 'Marian Sokołowski'.
- 5 Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*, 34.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 28.
- 7 The phrase chosen by the Slovak art historian to describe the processual character underpinning the creation of art history in East Central Europe: see Bakoš, *Discourses and Strategies*.
- 8 The concept appears in the title of the influential book by Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.
- 9 Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*; Rampley, Prokopovych and Veszprémi, *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform*.
- 10 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, iii.
- 11 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, part II, starting with page liii.
- 12 Rampley, 'Introduction', in *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary*, eds. Rampley, Prokopovych, and Veszprémi, 1–16.
- 13 See Sisa, *Motherland and Progress*.
- 14 Passini, *La fabrique de l'art national*.
- 15 Filipová, 'Writing and Displaying Nations'.

- 16 Geary and Klaniczay, *Manufacturing Middle Ages*.
- 17 Michaud, *Barbarian Invasions*.
- 18 See Chapter 7 by Kristina Jöekalda in this volume.
- 19 See Chapter 8 by Dubravka Botica in this volume.
- 20 See, for example, Mallart Romero, 'Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the European Periphery'.
- 21 Goethe, *Materialen zur Geschichte der Farbenlehre*, quoted in Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 27.
- 22 Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 11. See Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, 29.
- 23 Ibid. 29.
- 24 Janson, *History of Art*. Strategies incorporated there are referred to by Patricia Hills as 'hidden persuaders'. Hills, 'Art History Textbooks'.
- 25 See, for example, Nelson, 'Living on the Byzantine Borders'; Nelson, 'The Map of Art History'. For the purposes of this volume, it is also significant that reflection on the underpinning concepts and maps of art history started in Byzantine-oriented studies, which were deprived of the analogous tools of stylistic change used in simplistic Hegelian-rooted historiography.
- 26 Nelson, 'Living on the Byzantine Borders', esp. 4
- 27 Ibid., 3.
- 28 Nelson, 'The Map of Art History', 28. The whole article is based on Michel Foucault's concept of the archaeology of knowledge.
- 29 Schwarzer, 'Origins of the Art History Survey Text'.
- 30 *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*.
- 31 See, for example, András, 'Hungary in Focus'.
- 32 Borges, 'On Exactitude in Science', in *A Universal History of Infamy*, 131. The quote was ascribed by Borges to *Travels of Praiseworthy Men* by J. A. Suárez Miranda, but in fact it was created by Borges himself and Adolfo Bioy Casares in 1946.
- 33 Karlholm, *Art of Illusion*.
- 34 Kugler, *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*, as analysed by Karlholm in *Art of Illusion*.
- 35 See, in particular, Kaufmann, *Toward a Geography of Art*.
- 36 See Kaufmann, Dossin and Joyeux-Prunel, *Circulations in the Global History of Art*.
- 37 Artl@s, accessed November 12, 2021, <https://artlas.huma-num.fr/en/about/>.
- 38 Moxey, *Visual Time*, xi.
- 39 Ibid., 1.
- 40 Rampley, 'Agency, Affect and Intention', 2–3.
- 41 Sauerländer, 'From Stilus to Style', 266.
- 42 Didi-Huberman, *Atlas*, 46.
- 43 Ibid., 50, citing Foucault, *The Order of Things*, XV.
- 44 Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*. Cited in Moxey, *The Practice of Persuasion*, 42.
- 45 Moxey, *The Practice of Persuasion*; Stewart, *The Poet's Freedom*.
- 46 Łepkowski, *Starożytności i pomniki Krakowa*, 1.
- 47 Ibid., 1.
- 48 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, I.
- 49 See Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History*, 51.
- 50 Rastawiecki, *Słownik malarzów polskich*. Rastawiecki was also the author of the *Mappografia dawnej Polski* (Cartographic Description of the Old Poland), published in 1846.
- 51 Łepkowski, Letter to Edward Rastawiecki, 16 September 1850.
- 52 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 87. For a description of the Holy Cross Chapel in Kraków Cathedral, see Różycka-Bryzek, 'Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła'.
- 53 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 20–21.
- 54 See Hegel, *Aesthetics*. For a Polish response, see Kunińska, 'Rówieńczy'.
- 55 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 15.
- 56 Ibid., 16.
- 57 Ibid., 95.
- 58 Eitelberger von Edelberg, 'Zur Orientierung auf dem Gebiete der Baukunst'.
- 59 Said, *Orientalism*, 2.
- 60 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 5.

61 Ibid., 90.

62 For Burckhardt's evaluation of the Byzantine world, see Burckhardt, *The Age of Constantine the Great*, 345: 'At its [the Empire's] summit was despotism, infinitely strengthened by the union of churchly and secular dominion; in the place of morality it imposed orthodoxy; in the place of unbridled and demoralized expression of the natural instincts, hypocrisy and pretense; in the face of despotism greed masquerading as poverty developed, and deep cunning; in religious art and literature there was an incredible stubbornness in the constant repetition of obsolete motifs'.

63 Łepkowski, *Sztuka*, 163.

64 Ibid., 163.

65 See Rampley, 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline'. See also Rampley, 'Chapter 1: Founding a Discipline: Liberalism and the Idea of Scientific Method', in *The Vienna School of Art History*, 26–68.

Bibliography

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, rev. ed., 1991.

András, Edit. 'Hungary in Focus: Conservative Politics and Its Impact on the Arts. A Forum'. *Artmargins Online*, 17 September 2013. <https://artmargins.com/hungary-in-focus-forum/>.

Bradford R. Collins (ed.) *Art Journal* 55, no. 3 (1995): *Rethinking the Introductory Art History Survey*.

Bakoš, Ján. *Discourses and Strategies: The Role of the Vienna School in Shaping Central European Approaches to Art History and Related Discourses*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Verlag, 2013.

Barnard, Frederick M., ed. *Herder on Nationality, Humanity, and History*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2003.

Benjamin, Walter. *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. Translated by John Osborne. London: Verso, 1998.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *A Universal History of Infamy*. Translated by Norman Thomas di Giovanni. London: Penguin Books, 1975.

Burckhardt, Jacob. *The Age of Constantin the Great*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1949.

Cheah, Pheng. *What Is a World? On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

Didi-Huberman, Georges. *The Surviving Image: Phantoms of Time and Time of Phantoms; Aby Warburg's History of Art*. Translated by Harvey Mendelsohn. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2016.

Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Atlas, or the Anxious Gay Science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Eitelberger von Edelberg, Rudolf. 'Zur Orientierung auf dem Gebiete der Baukunst und ihrer Terminologie'. *Mittheilungen der Kaiserl. Königl. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Kunst- und historischen Denkmale*, no. 1 (1856): 50–51.

Elkins, James. *Our Beautiful, Dry and Distant Texts: Art History as Writing*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 1997.

Filipová, Marta. 'Writing and Displaying Nations: Constructing Narratives of National Art in Bohemia and Austria-Hungary'. *Kunsteiaduslikke Uurimus*, no. 23 (2014): 134–56.

Finkielkraut, Alain. *The Undoing of Thought*. Translated by Dennis O'Keefe. London: Claridge Press, 1988.

Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1966). New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

Geary, Patrick J., and Gábor Klaniczay. *Manufacturing Middle Ages: Entangled History of Medievalism in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.

Goethe, Johann Wolfgang. *Sämtliche Werke. Jubiläums-Ausgabe*, edited by Eduard von dem Heller, vol. 11. Stuttgart: Cotta, 1907.

- Halbwachs, Maurice. *On Collective Memory*. Translated by Francis Ditter Jr. and Vida Jazdi Ditter. New York: Harper and Row, 1980.
- Hegel, Georg Friedrich. *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*. Translated by Thomas Malcolm Knox. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- Herder, Johann Gottfried von. *Auch eine Philosophie der Geschichte zur Bildung der Menschheit*. Riga: Hartknoch, 1774.
- Hills, Patricia. 'Art History Textbooks: The Hidden Persuaders'. *Artforum* 14, no. 10 (1976): 58–61.
- Janson, Horst Waldemar. *History of Art: A Survey of the Major Visual Arts from the Dawn of History to the Present Day*. New York: Abrams, 1962.
- Karholm, Dan. *Art of Illusion: The Representation of Art History in Nineteenth-Century Germany and Beyond*. Bern: Lang, 2004.
- Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta. *Toward a Geography of Art*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2004.
- Kaufmann, Thomas DaCosta, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, eds. *Circulations in the Global History of Art*. Farnham: Ashgate, 2015.
- Kugler, Franz. *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte*. Stuttgart: Ebner und Saubner, 1842. <https://doi.org/10.11588/diglit.1230>.
- Kunińska, Magdalena. 'Marian Sokołowski: Patriotism and the Genesis of Scientific Art History in Poland'. *Journal of Art Historiography*, no. 8 (2013). <https://arthistoriography.files.wordpress.com/2013/06/kuninska.pdf>.
- Kunińska, Magdalena. *Historia Sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*. Kraków: Universitas, 2014.
- Kunińska, Magdalena. 'Rówieśnicy: "Listy niderlandzkie" Karla Schnaasego i "Listy z Krakowa" Józefa Kremera – początki historii sztuki w cieniu metafizyki heglowskiej'. In *Józef Kremer (1806–1875): Studia i materiały*, edited by Urszula Bęczkowska, Ryszard Kasperowicz, and Jacek Maj, 267–86. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Instytutu Historii Sztuki UJ, 2016. <http://doi.org/10.11588/artdok.00005371>.
- Łepkowski, Józef. *Starożytności i pomniki Krakowa*, vol. 1. Kraków: Księgarnia J. Wildt, 1847.
- Łepkowski, Józef. Letter to Edward Rastawiecki, 16 September 1850. Correspondance folio in Kraków State Archive, Box GK-1.
- Łepkowski, Józef. *Sztuka: Zarys jej dziejów; zarazem podręcznik dla uczących się i przewodnik dla podróżujących*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo Dziel Tanich i Pożytecznych, 1872.
- Mallart Romero, Lucila. 'Josep Puig i Cadafalch and the European Periphery'. In *Cdf International Congress Barcelona June 2013: Proceedings, Actes, Actas, Actes*, edited by Lluís Bosch and Mireia Freixa. Barcelona: Publicacions i Edicions de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2015. <http://www.edicions.ub.edu/ficha.aspx?cod=08250&tab=1>.
- Michaud, Éric. *Barbarian Invasions: How the History of Art Begins with the Myth of the Barbarian Invasion – the Romantic Fragmentation of Classical Eternity*. Translated by Nicholas Huckle. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2019.
- Moravánszky, Ákos. 'Searching for the National Styles'. In *Competing Visions: Aesthetic Invention and Social Imagination in Central European Architecture, 1867–1918*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998.
- Moxey, Keith. 'Art History's Hegelian Unconscious: Naturalism as Nationalism in the Study of Early Netherlandish Painting'. In *The Subject of Art History: Historical Objects in Contemporary Perspective*, edited by Mark A. Cheetham, Michael Ann Holly, and Keith Moxey, 25–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Moxey, Keith. *The Practice of Persuasion: Paradox and Power in Art History*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Moxey, Keith. *Visual Time: The Image in History*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013.
- Nelson, Robert. 'Living on the Byzantine Borders of Western Art'. *Gesta* 35 (1996): 3–11. <https://doi.org/10.2307/767222>.
- Nelson, Robert. 'The Map of Art History'. *Art Bulletin* 79 (1997): 28–40. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3046228>.

- Passini, Michaela. *La fabrique de l'art national: Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne, 1870–1933*. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 2012.
- Piotrowski, Piotr. 'Towards Horizontal Art History'. In *Crossing Cultures: Conflict, Migration and Convergence*, edited by Jaynie Anderson, 82–85. Melbourne: The Miegunyah Press, 2009.
- Preziosi, Daniel. *Brain of the Earth's Body: Art, Museums, and the Phantasms of Modernity*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.
- Rampley, Matthew. 'The Idea of a Scientific Discipline: Rudolf von Eitelberger and the Emergence of Art History in Vienna, 1847–1885'. *Art History* 34, no. 1 (2011): 54–79.
- Rampley, Matthew. *The Vienna School of Art History: Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2013.
- Rampley, Matthew. 'Agency, Affect and Intention in Art History: Some Observations'. *Journal of Art Historiography* 24 (June 2021). <https://doi.org/10.48352/uobxjah.00003428>.
- Rampley, Matthew, Markian Prokopovych, and Nóra Veszprémi. *Liberalism, Nationalism and Design Reform in the Habsburg Empire: Museums of Design, Industry and the Applied Arts*. London: Routledge, 2020.
- Rampley, Matthew, Markian Prokopovych, and Nóra Veszprémi. *The Museum Age in Austria-Hungary: Art and Empire in the Long Nineteenth Century*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2020.
- Rastawiecki, Edward. *Słownik malarzów polskich tudzież obcych w Polsce osiadłych lub czasowo w niej przebywających*, vols 1–3. Warsaw: S. Orgelbrand, 1850–57.
- Różycka-Bryzek, Anna. 'Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła ściennie w kaplicy Świętokrzyskiej na Wawelu'. *Studia do Dziejów Wawelu* 3 (1968): 175–293.
- Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Sauerländer, Willibald. 'From Stylus to Style: Reflections on the Fate of a Notion'. *Art History* 6, no. 3 (1983): 253–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8365.1983.tb00815.x>.
- Schwarzer, Mitchell. 'Origins of the Art History Survey Text'. *Art Journal* 54 (1995): 24–29. <https://doi.org/10.2307/777579>.
- Sisa, József. *Motherland and Progress: Hungarian Architecture and Design 1800–1900*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 2017.
- Sokołowski, Marian. *Ruiny na Ostrowie Jeziora Lednicy. Studium nad budownictwem w przedchrześcijańskich i pierwszych chrześcijańskich wiekach w Polsce*. Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 1876.
- Springer, Anton. *Handbuch der Kunstgeschichte: Zum Gebrauche für Künstler und Studierende und als Führer auf der Reise*. Stuttgart: Rieger, 1855.
- Stewart, Susan. *The Poet's Freedom: A Notebook on Making*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011.
- Walicki, Michał, and Stefan Starzyński. 'Dzieje sztuki polskiej'. In *Historia sztuki*, edited by Richard Hamann, 909–1249. Translated by Mieczysław Wallis. Warsaw: M. Arct, 1934.
- Walicki, Michał, and Stefan Starzyński. *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*. Warsaw: M. Arct, 1936.
- Wolff, Larry. *Inventing Eastern Europe: The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.