

## **Konrad Niemira**

Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporain, Ecole normale supérieure, Paris / Institute of Art History, University of Warsaw

### **How German was the Polish "French Century"?**

#### **Artistic Transfers between Paris and Warsaw 1730-1810**

The aim of my project is to retrace, understand and describe artistic transfers between Poland and France in 18th century. In order to accomplish this objective I will investigate the acquisitions of Polish clients at French art market, their commands to French artists, and migrations of French artists to Poland. These three aspects of the phenomenon of transfer will constitute the main research paths of the project.

My aim is to confront the sublime image of so-called cultural exchange with its more profane, more material and also more pragmatic background. I would like to show the importance of intermediators and mediators who have facilitated the mobility of objects and artists. I am particularly interested in the social and economic dimensions of transfers. My aim is also to show which role took in it the diplomacy and political relations between the two countries. It seems that this analysis will not only fill the gap in art history of Poland and France, but also could open new perspectives for research.

Two hypotheses are envisaged: the first is that analysis of transfer will help to reinterpret the image of artistic culture of 18th-century Poland. As Pierre Moisy has already pointed out in 1939, the Polish culture of the Enlightenment "n'est pas aussi francisée qu'on a bien voulu le dire". Despite this early attempt of revision, there are still many art historians who believe in the French myth. In research on Polish culture of 18<sup>th</sup> century the notion of "siècle français" is still omnipresent. By analyzing the factors of art market, the transfer of capital, rather than transfer of ideas or forms, I would like to show that image of Poland living under French influence is much more complex. The second hypothesis is that not only art objects and artists, are involved in the culture of court or salon, but also the numerous mediators such as agents, amateurs, or even bankers.

Therefore, one of my goals is to describe the political context in which the importance of cultural transfers becomes perfectly visible. I would like to analyze whether the interest in French art in Poland resembled, or even imitated the interest we can find in Dresden, Berlin, Vienna and St. Petersburg. My working hypothesis is that both interest and network of exchange between Poland and France dependent from the German model. Moreover: at this stage of my research it seems that

german countries and german agents have played the crucial role in organisation on Franco-Polish artistic transfers.

## Significance and methods

Since more than 30 years the notion of sociability recapture the interest of art history and cultural history of the Enlightenment. Since Daniel Roche numerous publications show the importance of this category in the transformations of the public sphere of art and in the shift of social position of artists. We perceive today public space of the 18th century as a structure of "small worlds": academies, salons, masonic lodges, communities of taste. The sociability have had a crucial role not only in the development of modern art market, but also in the creation of a new identity of amateur and artist.

My project fits into the current of new studies on sociability and art market. It will not be, however, a continuation of the research on parisian scene as it. The scholars that have been working in this field (Guillaume Glorieux, Patrick Michel), if speak about foreigners present at the parisian art market, usually speak only about German, British, Russian or Swedish aristocracy. However, my aim is not to enumerate the forgotten Polish clients, but understand how the Polish- French network was organised. Organised not only by clients, artists, and merchants, but also by mediators, *amateurs* and bankers who circulated between these spaces.

The mobility of artists and works of art in the age of Enlightenment has been an object of research of art historians for many years. The presence of French artists in Poland is a well-known phenomenon, and the synthesis of Franco-Polish relations has already been initiated by a few scholars, i.e. Louis Dussieux, Louis Reau, Pierre Francastel and Andrzej Ryszkiewicz. Most of researchers who worked on synthesis of Franco-Polish relations limited themselves to the enumeration of migrating artists, rather than analysis of the social and economic mechanisms that structured their activities in Poland. The scale and the structure of Polish market of luxury objects were never a subject of separate analysis. I would like to fill this gap and propose a new vision of Franco-Polish relations based on the critical, almost reductionist approach.

My point of departure is a very simple, or even reductionist definition of cultural exchange as a transfer. I define transfer, as Michel Espagne, in a very profane sense as material exchange between several poles: "artist's mobility/migration" and "translocation of an art object" (painting, book, engraving, furniture, etc.). Therefore my approach goes beyond tradition of art history to the interdisciplinarity. I consider this project as a cross section of social history, art history and sociology of art.