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Visual Working Objects – The Construction of National Heritage in Jan Sas Zubrzycki's *Treasury of Architecture in Poland*

The institutionalisation of art history in Europe was driven and shaped by the search for national identity in the 19th century. While other European countries enjoyed political sovereignty, the lack of national independence as well as the differing levels of foreign cultural dominion in the Central European territories of Russia, Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Empire lead to multifaceted approaches to art history. Conveying a specific national canon of literature, art or architecture was fundamental in the process of preserving and constructing national identity. Since, every science is necessarily prompted to use suitable representations to approach the world, the art historical canon materialised in numerous volumes and scientific articles. The images, understood as visual working objects[1] created for a specific purpose, have a certain autonomy in the discourse.

I aim to complement the discussion about the writing of art history widening the frame of investigation to Central European art historical practice in the beginning of the 20th century. Consequently, my PHD project focuses on illustrated volumes published in central Europe in the beginning of the 20th century. Despite the different languages used in the volumes, they share the objective to present a (complete) inventory and overlook of national architecture. However, the media used to convey this knowledge differ correspondingly to different approaches to art history itself and the writing of architectural history. In my analysis I concentrate on the images provided in the selected volumes, revising the visual construction of heritage and art historical canon formation. Further, this project seeks to illuminate today's challenges of (re)forming an adequate and justifiable canon for art history regarding post-colonial studies and transcultural, intercontinental, global art histories.

As starting point for my planned contribution to this forum, I chose "Skarb architektury w Polsce" (Treasury of architecture in Poland, 1907-1916) by Jan Sas Zubrzycki. Within the four published volumes of "Skarb architektury w Polsce" (1907-1916) a visual canon of Polish architectural history is constructed. The heterogeneous visual material in "Skarb architektury w Polsce" not only illustrates the multimediality of art historical practice at the time and the coeval search for adequate visualisations methods, but also characterises the pursuit of scientific (and of course also political) independence by writing a polish history of architecture emancipated from the German-speaking and Western focused discourse. Regarding this material, I focus on the following questions:

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[1] Daston, Lorraine; Galison, Peter (2007): Objectivity. p. 19-22.

How do the images in these volumes shape the presented canon of architectural monuments considering the visualisation strategies, printing techniques and the underlying line of arguments? Ensuing the problem of reproduction, authorship and the market but also the construction of national heritage in Poland – therefore the establishing of a specific canon.

Accordingly, I will briefly present a characteristic selection of images from this compendium to answer the above-mentioned questions. Comparing the results with the broader context of the coeval European art-historical discourse, bears the opportunity to discuss the role of images in the formation of an architectural canon and the writing of art history – leaving its traces until today.

This confrontation opens the discussion for related and important general questions: Why were visual approaches like Zubrzycki's not successful in art-historical discourses? Who shapes the visual working objects art historians rely on in their research and what are the expectations of those images? And most importantly, how can this knowledge be designed in the future?