The Cracow school of modern art history: the creation of a method and an institution 1850-1880

Stefan Muthesius

Introduction: Polish art history

There are few Western institutions or groups of art historians that can be called a ‘School’. The ‘Vienna School’ had no parallel in other German-speaking universities. In a few cases one may speak of a ‘school’ attached to a major protagonist, such as the ‘Wölfflin School’, but this never became fixed to a place. There is one location not too far from Germania, however, which to this day sports a strong institution, the ‘Cracow School of Art History’ (Figure 1). The basic reasons for its unusual cohesiveness are simple. From its origins around 1860-1880 until today virtually all Cracow art historians were teachers and pupils in the institute of art history at the Jagiellonian University as well as serving with the city’s other scientific institutions. Partly this was also due to the fact that until 1917 Cracow remained the only university department of art history in all Polish-speaking lands (with the exception of a small department at Lwów / Lemberg University from 1893). This article deals with the way the Cracow School became established institutionally and with some of its methodological premises, in particular, its special emphasis on the idea of ‘scientific’ (naukowy) method. Exactly when the term ‘Cracow School’ became

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1 This article is a considerably extended version of the article ‘The beginnings of the Cracow School of art history,’ Journal of Art Historiography, 7, 2012, which concentrates on the period up to 1880.

2 The Polish term ‘naukowy’ is a cognate of the German ‘wissenschaftlich’ and comprises both the sciences and the humanities.
current has not been established, but the most important recent writer on the history of the institution, Adam Małkiewicz, uses it copiously.\(^3\)

To begin with, can one speak more generally of a ‘Polish art history’, beyond referring simply to the language used? While always bearing in mind that Western academic art history is essentially ‘one’, in terms of the methods used, there are several reasons why the wording ‘Polish art history’ has some meaning. First, Polish art historians have restricted themselves to a very large extent to the art and architecture of Poland. This is due to the special cultural-political situation of the country during much of the time in which art history has been practised: Poland’s non-existence until 1918, the destruction of much of the country in Hitler’s war with the subsequent decades of rebuilding, as well as three or more decades of isolation from the West under Soviet rule. There was of course ‘the other side’ to this, the lack of attention paid by art historians in western Europe to anything Polish, whether to writings or works of art, and a special kind of contempt running through much German art history.

To cite an early extreme example of a German evaluation in 1876, from the multi-volume *Geschichte der bildenden Künste* by the then most highly respected Carl Schnaase.

… in actual fact the Poles are in many ways quite a gifted people, but a sense of architecture is lacking there to the highest degree. Tacitus already remarked on the way in which, in contrast to the Wenden who built houses, the Sarmates lived in their wagons and on their horses (…) and this description still applies (…) to the Polish nobility today.\(^4\)

Schnaase does at least admit that Cracow possesses some interesting monuments; many German art historians of the following two or three generations claimed them to be Germanic in style. In the briefest of overviews, one may trace the beginnings of a Polish art history to the reign of the last King, Stanislaw August, who in the late eighteenth century developed a serious interest in the country’s history. After his demise in 1795 a few Polish noblemen and especially noblewomen carried on collecting works of art, resulting, in 1801, in one of the first buildings one might call an art museum, containing both classical and local antiquities, the so-called ‘Domek Gotycki’ (little Gothic house) in the park of Puławy. One large undertaking that embraced the

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spirit of the international Neo-Classical community as well as the local interest was the long treatise by Count Stanisław Kostka Potocki, *O sztuce u dawnych czyli Winckelmann Polski* (On the Art of the Ancients, or, the Polish Winckelmann) of 1815. In subsequent decades archaeologists and antiquarians, especially from Warsaw, busied themselves collecting information about historic monuments and works of art. Antiquarianism flourished in Cracow, too, but it was in that city that more modern methods were introduced, from the 1860s, and where the production of monographs began, pioneered by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz (1828-1900) and supported by a new strong institutional structure. It is this phase which is the subject of this article.

It was only from 1917 onwards that more departments opened in the other centres of the reunited Poland, still on a modest scale. After the end of the Nazi catastrophe in 1945 came the strongest growth, especially in Warsaw with the installation of a large new academic institution, the *Instytut Sztuki* (Institute of Art). After about 1970 Polish art history gained new contacts and the esteem of Western, increasingly of Anglo-American art history; outstanding figures were Jan Białostocki in Warsaw and Lech Kalinowski in Cracow. Poznań gained a reputation in New Art History. Only during the last ten or twenty years can Polish art history be seen as fully taking part in academic art history world-wide.

**Cracow**

A major factor which helped to bring about the Cracow school of art history in the nineteenth century and which made it unusual was the way it was so intimately tied in with, and so effective for the culture and the cultural politics of that city. Cracow’s urban existence in the nineteenth century was a most singular one. Already in relative decline from 1600 onwards, when Warsaw had become the Polish capital, the partitions of the late eighteenth century and the annihilation of Poland as a sovereign state at first brought nothing but poverty. By the first half of the nineteenth century Cracow had shrunk to a smallish town of political and cultural insignificance. The second half of the century brought economic growth, as everywhere else, but it also consolidated Cracow’s urban character by keeping its well-defined ‘historical’ centre intact. In contrast to Russian and Prussian Poland, Austrian Poland was considered peaceful, which attracted many members of the old

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Polish nobility to the city, whose money provided vital backing for the growth of its artistic and educational institutions. Unlike Prague or Zagreb, however, not to speak of mighty Budapest, cities which formed centres of well-defined regions within the Hapsburg Empire, Cracow lacked a strong hinterland, perched as it was against the border to Russian Poland, in a province, Galicia, of which far-away Lwów/Lemberg, and not Cracow, was the regional capital. Its rise to eminence after 1850 was primarily in the field of culture, in spite of its political insignificance or, one may say, even in defiance of it. More than anywhere else in the Polish regions, its artistic and historic monuments spoke of Poland’s former national splendour. It is possible to follow a growing enthusiasm for the past during the course of the nineteenth century, with an especial interest in the Middle Ages. The fine arts blossomed, too, from the 1860s onwards. Jan Matejko’s large-scale paintings of Polish history added substantially to the image of an ‘Old Poland’ and of the ‘duch Krakowa’ (spirit of Cracow) in particular. To find a European parallel one might point to the way in which, during the nineteenth century, Germans came to cherish medieval imperial Nuremberg, which by then had also lost all national political significance. However, Cracow also took on an additional identity comparable to the ‘Kunststadt’ Munich, a tall order given that the Polish city was then only growing slowly from 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants.

Cracow and Vienna

Cracow’s new art history began to be formulated around 1850. Its development in the city begins and ends with its monuments. It was the intensified sense of care for them that spurred a new movement in the 1840s. The Cracovians thereby acted in unison with many European countries, Austria among them. Indeed, Cracow just preceded Vienna in these efforts, but the development of monument protection in the Austrian capital was incomparably more powerful, and during the next two decades Vienna also aimed to incorporate the heritage of its Galician province. Hence Vienna must be discussed first.

When seen from divided and occupied Poland, or, more precisely speaking, from ‘backward’ Galicia and impoverished Cracow, the Hapsburg Empire might have appeared as the absolute power. However, within the immensely complex conglomerate of the Austrian ‘Crownlands’ and with the acute uncertainties of the future alignments of all German speaking countries and Vienna’s role amongst them, ‘Austria’ was then quite unsure of itself. In addition there were the after-effects of the 1848 Revolution, with the continuing and increasing demands for self-

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determination by the Empire’s many groups. The Emperor’s decision was to stress Austria’s separateness from Germany, but this was combined with emphasis on strong internal unity of all the Crownlands. As regards social and democratic progress, the central government enacted a plethora of ‘reforms’, particularly in the realm of education, that were rationally and scientifically devised and overseen by new groups of experts.

Declaration of the historical richness of a country or nation was a familiar practice in the nineteenth century, often used by rulers to fortify their subjects’ sense of identity as well as political submission. In this context ‘Denkmalpflege,’ to use a later comprehensive German term, meaning the care, protection and restoration of old monuments, became, in the early 1850s, a new countrywide issue and a specially urgent one. In the pronouncements of its chief Viennese protagonist, Rudolf Eitelberger von Edelberg, it took on a proselytising tone. Such concern led to the installation of a completely new administrative structure, the ‘Imperial-Royal Commission for the Investigation and Conservation of Historic Buildings’ (K. [und] k. Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale), which, while of course firmly anchored in Vienna, aimed to stretch out to all the regions.

As the story of the development of Cracow art history will reveal, one may see close parallels between the two seats of learning throughout. As in Vienna, the priority in the early 1850s was the care for old buildings and that meant first of all research and the recognition of their specificity. The new conservation movement not only created a new institutional framework, it also set out some of the principal methods of the new ‘scientific’ study of monuments or, at any rate, its parameters.

Eitelberger’s initial argument was that Austria was way behind other major countries, especially France, and to some extent also Prussia, in its treatment of its ancient monuments. He greatly admired the new art historical writings originating from Berlin, especially the impressively comprehensive handbooks by Franz Kugler. Eitelberger’s great concern was that Austria was underrepresented in them, but, he wrote, this was entirely ‘our fault’ because Austrians had simply not done the research themselves.11 A huge challenge was now raised, to obtain knowledge about all the monuments in the country. This knowledge had to be authoritative, it had to be ‘streng wissenschaftlich’ (strictly scientific).12 The new Wissenschaft had to be ‘exact’; hence aesthetics and all speculation had to be excluded.13 Eitelberger was full of admiration for Kugler’s methods, which supplied ‘positive facts’ and openly admitted where knowledge had ‘gaps’.

The art historian’s procedures had first of all to link up with history, with the expert use of old documents – Eitelberger worked closely with new kinds of

12 Mittheilungen, 1: 1 1856; Eitelberger review of Kugler.
13 ‘Vorwort, Gesetzliche Bestimmungen,’ Jahrbuch der Kaiserlich- Königlichen Central-Commission zur Erforschung und Erhaltung der Baudenkmale, 1: 1857, 2-32; some writings received special praise, others were criticised, ‘Personalstand’, Jahrbuch, 2: 1857 vii-xxxvi.
historical research established in Vienna at that time. A set scheme of recording had to be followed. The basic scheme was to begin with ‘history’, followed by ‘description’, using specialised architectural terms. Crucial was the ‘Würdigung’, the assessment of the monuments’ merits, so as to arrive at fair choices regarding urgency of protection and finance. It was at this point that a special art value had to come in and a clear distinction had to be made between cultural history, on the one hand, and art history and its ‘Kunstwerte’ on the other. Soon the terminology ‘Bau- und Kunstdenkmäler’ became common. Much was already being achieved in Vienna in the 1850s and by about 1870 one could probably consider the bulk of important monuments in the country to have been dealt with and quite extensively illustrated as well.

Historical monuments could be found everywhere, in ‘the whole of the emperor’s lands’. All citizens could find some local heritage to identify with, and they were to be admonished to know about it and respect it. But clearly the Commission could not do all the work required, or even supervise it all; it had to have regional help. Thus, mostly unpaid local ‘conservators’ were appointed in all the Crownlands.

As regards the love of the old, there could hardly be a more apt location than Cracow. This distant and politically insignificant town caught the interest of Viennese scholars and officials concerned with conservation. Two Poles were appointed as unpaid conservators in 1853, Józef Łepkowski (1826-94) and Paweł Popiel (1807-1892), both of whom were prominent men in the world of Cracow antiquarians. In 1859 Eitelberger briefly visited Cracow to see an exhibition of antiquities and came home full of praise for the local specialists. During the 1850s and 60s only Vienna and Prague were mentioned more frequently in the Central-Commission’s Mittheilungen. Most of the substantial contributions were supplied by August Essenwein (1831-92), a prominent German architect and architectural historian who later became Director of the Germanisches Nationalmuseum in Nuremberg. His articles were brought together in his substantial book of 1866, Die

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15 ‘Vorwort, Gesetzliche Bestimmungen,’ Jahrbuch, 1: 1856, 7, 18, 21, 29.
20 Jahrbuch, 1: 1856, 6, 9, 14.
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*mittelalterlichen Kunstdenkmale der Stadt Krakau* (Figure 2). His method of assessing medieval churches was essentially rationalist and although the book carried a hefty dedication to the Emperor’s brother, Erzherzog Carl Ludwig Joseph Maria, it is free of Germanic nationalism. Indeed, one might even call it a Polophile work. While Essenwein acknowledged the help of the local researchers, scholars in Cracow were rather more ambivalent in their assessment of his book; no one in Cracow could, after all, have afforded the lavishness of all the Vienna-sponsored publications before the later 1870s. In terms of methodology, however, Essenwein’s research was comparable to the work by Cracow’s most advanced art historian of the time, Łuszczkiewicz (Figure 3) who was also his approximate contemporary.

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23 August Essenwein, *Die mittelalterlichen Kunstdenkmale der Stadt Krakau*. Graz: Schneider, 1866; 2nd ed. Leipzig: Brockhaus 1869. Essenwein had been preceded by the Austrian historian and librarian Dr. Constantin Wurzbach, *Die Kirchen der Stadt Krakau, eine Monographie zur Geschichte und Kirchengeschichte des einstigen Königreiches Polen*, Vienna: Mechitaristen Buchhandlung, 1853, a very sympathetic account but without art historical significance.

Commission. The Viennese government was trying to integrate the distant Galician province more tightly into a centralised state, fearful of the intensifying regional demands for ethnic (and eventual political) autonomy. Quite how the relationship between the parties was working out in Cracow itself during the 1850s and 1860s still needs to be clarified. In general, however, there were clear parallels between Vienna and Cracow in the way that the new efforts at Denkmalpflege gave birth to a new art history.

The political relationship between Vienna the Imperial authority and the Poles in Galicia has been the subject of many debates. At the time the Poles themselves were somewhat divided on this issue; some, such as the ‘conservatives’, many of whom were members of the old nobility, advocated a pragmatic accommodation with the Empire. From the late 1860s onwards Galicia, in tune with the other lands of Austria, profited from the retrenchment that the Habsburgs were forced into because of their losses in the wars with Italy and Prussia; the Poles also gained cultural autonomy through their judicious use of the official channels of regional government. The Polish language was restored. The most favourable interpretation on both sides was now: the Austrians could be satisfied that it was they who had sanctioned Cracow’s institutions, while those in Cracow could rest with the sense that they conducted these institutions entirely in the way that suited their own Polish aspirations. In that sense Vienna’s interest in, and care for, Cracow’s heritage may also be interpreted as double-sided, as an attempt to appropriate the city’s culture through Germanising organisations and scholarship, which at the same time strengthened the sense of a Polish heritage.

A rather different issue is the often alluded-to influence of the ‘Vienna School of Art History’. There is factual evidence that Vienna University was one the many places where Marian Sokołowski, the first professor of art history in Cracow, went to hear lectures in art history in 1872/3, before embarking on his dissertation and habilitation at the Jagiellonian University. Adam Małkiewicz, who has dealt with the question most recently, remains ambivalent: of course Sokołowski was fully aware of the ways in which Eitelberger and Moritz Thausing were pursuing their studies but he cannot have been just a passive recipient.

It was only after 1900, when some Polish art historians took up, or discussed, the new methodological proposals emanating from Vienna, that a clear relationship was established with the imperial capital. Before the 1890s art historians produced

few overt statements of any length outlining specific methods which then could be adopted, or disputed; hence a statement by Sokolowski to the effect that he adhered to the methods used by, say, Thausing, could hardly be expected. A colleague or teacher could be held up as a model of probity, exactitude, industry, or simply as having thrown light on an object or a period that one happens to be interested in. Ample general praise of such general nature is contained in Sokolowski’s obituary of Eitelberger in the journal Przegląd Polski, an elegant and warm tribute which includes personal memories, such as ‘we last met in Rome in 1879’, written by somebody who saw himself as an equal, hardly as a disciple. A key praise comes with the citing of ‘that Roman Emperor’ who said on his death-bed: ‘Laboremus’. Briefly, but decisively, Sokolowski writes about Eitelberger’s relationship with Cracow:

Several times he visited Cracow; he knew it well and held it in esteem. The Cracow School of Fine Arts owed to him its organisation and the University its chair in art history. It hurt him rather that the conditions of our governmental structures did not allow him to influence the growth of other ones of our provincial institutions as he had desired it, and those who knew him, knew that these were not empty words in his mouth. 29

It is important to note that although they inhabited part of Austria, Cracow-based researchers had a limited interest in the monuments of the other Crownlands; the new detailed research on Austria produced in Vienna was consequently of little concern to them. Medievalists tended rather to look directly west, to France and Germany, towards the art in those countries, as well the literature about it. More generally, Cracow intellectuals, while ardently fighting the Polish cause were always trying to be open towards a more broadly defined ‘higher, European spirit’. 30

The Cracow Scientific Society, the Academy and the University

The early growth of art history was thus based on intensification of the links between the pursuit of scientific rigour and exactitude, on the one hand, and newly created institutions, on the other. Academies were held to entail spheres of unusual freedom but that freedom had first to be granted by the highest authorities of the state, who then materially supported that research work, including publication, while researchers had to profess an ethos of continuous effort and exactitude. Throughout the period under discussion Cracow’s art historical research was closely tied into the institutional framework. Indeed it would appear that high-ranking


academic work could be undertaken only within official institutions of science and learning.

According to this narrative any research done before 1850 or 1860 was deemed practically worthless. This is, of course, a thoroughly unjust judgement, for it did not acknowledge the considerable knowledge that had been amassed by Ambroży Grabowski (1782-1868), director of the university library in Cracow, or by the historian and publisher Francisek Maksymilian Sobieszczański (1813-1878) based in Warsaw. Neither does this account see much value in the writings of the aesthetician Józef Kremer (1806-1875) in Cracow, nor the more general kinds of historical speculations of figures such as the historian and journalist Józef Ignacy Kraszewski (1812-87). Indeed, in order gain a sense of the considerable achievements of Polish writers, especially those in Warsaw, before this period one must turn to Jolanta Polanowska’s incisive study of art historical writing before 1860.31

The principal reproach levelled at earlier writers was that of amateurishness. In 1906 in a tribute to Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, one of his followers, the art historian and member of the Cracow Academy, Leonard Lepszy remarked that Cracow ‘was rampant with dilettantism, a casualness with words and judgements, and at the same time [there was] much fervour and loud busy-bodying’, a careless use of documents; and ‘chauvinism which masked unbelief … the atmosphere was heavy, disastrous.’ 32 Unusually for an author based in Cracow, Lepszy writes rather positively about the efforts in Warsaw around mid-century, which provided ‘a synthesis, but without going into the matter in depth’; nevertheless, Lepszy could hardly let it pass that Sobieszczański dated Cracow’s famed Renaissance Sukiennice, the Cloth Hall, to the Byzantine period. 33

The new academics failed to remember, however, that before the 1850s there was little of anything in Cracow. Grabowski was principally a modest bookseller who accumulated a large body of historical facts about buildings and much else, but who in his guide book-like publications was not able to make more than the most general judgements; yet he laid the foundations of a patriotic recognition of the monuments on which all subsequent efforts were built.34 For all its poverty Cracow did possess a major seat of learning, venerable like the city itself, the Jagiellonian University. Alongside such a place devoted to teaching there needed to be another kind of institution which was concerned more strictly with research. Such a body was created in 1815, modestly named the ‘Towarzystwo Naukowe’ (Scientific Society);


34 Cf.Ambroży Grabowski, Dawne zabytki miasta Krakowa, Cracow: Czas 1850
‘academy’ would have sounded too grand for the Poland of that time. In effect it was a kind of appendix to the university, led principally by its professors. 35 It did occasionally report on fine art, but the city’s antiquarian pursuits would not have found debate in this strictly scientific circle.

Then, rather suddenly, in 1849, a lecture squarely addressed the matter of Cracow’s heritage, expertly placing it into a wider European context. The lecturer of ‘Some considerations of the importance of works of the fine arts in our region’36 was not a pure academic, but the city’s academically educated building inspector, the ‘Dyrektor Budownictwa’, Dr. Karol Kremer, brother of the philosopher Józef Kremer. There was little patriotic rhetoric, but Kremer succinctly advocated a practical and systematic recording of monuments and measures for their protection, pointing to models in France and Scandinavia. The decisive step taken immediately at the Towarzystwo in 1849 was the installation of a special group in the Society, the ‘Section for Archaeology and Fine Arts’.37 In 1850 the group duly issued a pamphlet entitled ‘Hints on Research and Studies of Antiquities’38 that encompasses buildings from all periods, yet the details regarding the latter appear quite poor in comparison with those dealing with archaeological remains. Recently Urszula Bęczkowska, in an exhaustive and incisive study of Kremer, has stressed the institutional factors, in particular, the fact that Kremer could exercise authority because of his civic office. In 1850 he gained additional power when he set out to restore and rebuild significant sections of Cracow after a large fire.

In a further lecture in 1852 Kremer tried to bridge the gap between a general speculative art history and local antiquarian observations. Beginning with the former, somewhat in the tone established by his brother, he presented a detailed building analysis of the Sukienice. It was indeed an important new step, although Bęczkowska goes too far, perhaps, in claiming that Kremer developed his own art historical language.39 The Sukienice at that time was a cumbersome building, with just a few features that could be given a stylistic label, or be regarded as ‘beautiful’ (‘piękny’). Kremer thus takes the Sukienice apart rather like an archaeologist and historical chronicler. It would be another fifteen years before the appearance of a more methodologically advanced architectural history of Cracow’s buildings.

Undoubtedly the most important figure among the increasing number of Cracow heritage specialists during the 1850s and 1860s was Józef Łepkowski. His
role as Conservator for the Central Commission in Vienna was only one of the ever increasing number of public or semi-public appointments he came to hold. Initially he was a strong Polish nationalist and he published patriotic texts similar to those of Grabowski. However, by the early 1860s a new outlook came to the fore, in which he contrasted ‘antiquarianism’ with ‘research and exact studies’, elaborating further on what he saw as the contrast between ‘objects of memory’ (or ‘fondling oneself in the sentimental’) and the ‘artistic monument’. To Łepkowski all this simply appeared synonymous with a general distinction between the important and the trivial.40 A clear difference should be made, he argued, between archaeological monuments and those of artistic value. On the other hand inventarisation should be comprehensive, with the inclusion of buildings of lesser artistic value, too.41 In 1872 Łepkowski published a substantial volume Sztuka zarys jej dziejów (Art, Outline of its History) the first handbook in Polish on general art history, based on a thorough knowledge of the latest Western general literature. Its main slant was practical, providing lives of artists, with information that would guide the traveller, as well as comprehensive indices.42

It was typical for the mid-nineteenth century that those who stood at the beginning of institutionalised art history had themselves had a chequered upbringing, which had included academic studies but hardly in the subject in which they were to become prominent academics; the most noted innovators, such as Eitelberger und Anton Springer, exemplified this phenomenon: Eitelberger had studied philosophy while Springer was trained as a historian. In 1863 Łepkowski submitted his habilitation and in 1865 he began the teaching archaeology, which included medieval architecture. From 1875 onwards he held the chair in archaeology at the university in Cracow and later rose to become Dean of Faculty and even Rector. His career marked the full academic recognition of the subject. One of his first major ‘deeds’ was to examine Sokołowski’s thesis and habilitation, who, in turn, from 1877, was employed at the Jagiellonian University’s new department of Art History, first as dozent and then eventually as full professor. Henceforward there was hardly an art historian who was not trained in the discipline.43

An equally important development during the 1860s and 1870s was the establishment of specialised institutions that could foster pure, independent research. Throughout the 1860s the Towarzystwo Naukowe, closed down in 1852

40 ‘Pieszczeniem się sentymentalnem z każdym okruchem przeszłości’, ‘odróżnić ważne od blachego, pamiętaj od zabytku sztuki’; ‘antykwarstwo od badania i studyum ściśłego’, Józef Łepkowski, O Zabytkach Kruszwicy, Gniezna i Krakowa…, Cracow: Czas, 1866 (publ. in Czas [Kraków] 1862), 4, see also 371-387.


42 Józef Łepkowski, Sztuka zarys jej dziejów zarazem podręcznik dla uczących się i przewodnik dla podróżujących, Cracow: Czas, 1872; the list of Western art historical books counts to 14, Polish books 12; see also Tadeusz Mańkowski, ‘Ze studiów nad historiografią sztuki w Polsce (pt. 2), Muzealnictwo [Poznań], 12, 1964, 13-19.

but then relaunched in 1857, now prefaced with the letters c.-k. (Cesarstwo-królowe, the Polish equivalent of K. k., Kaiserlich-königlich, imperial-royal) was the main, even the only, sponsor of scientific research, which it published in its yearbook, the Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego Krakowskiego (Figure 3). Its most important

![Yearbook of the Cracow Scientific Society](image)

Figure 3 Yearbook of the Cracow Scientific Society; note the size of the letters Ces. Król. = K.k. = Imperial – Royal

contribution in the 1860s was a multi-authored publication on the Monastery of Mogila\(^\text{45}\). Altogether the humanities were now in the ascendancy, particularly those dealing with Poland, which had been severely neglected under Austrian rule so far. An essential part of the process of institutionalisation was the differentiation of topics and approaches, leading to their establishing themselves as separate subjects. History in particular gained massive support; a Historical Commission (Komisja Historyczna) was established at the Towarzystwo in 1869 and in the same year the University instituted a Chair of Polish History.\(^\text{46}\) It was held by Józef Szujski (1835-83), who became the founder of the ‘Cracow School of (Polish) History’. ‘Truth’,

\(^{44}\) See above, note 34.

\(^{45}\) Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie, Monografia Opactwa Cystersów we wsi Mogile, Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867.

'precision', the 'great scientific conscience' were among his principal watchwords. Research had to be evidence-based throughout. The humanities should learn from the modes of empirical control in the natural sciences. The smallest details could count, little things, ‘as in chemistry’. What also followed was a stress on the expert use of original sources and soon historians began to publish volumes of historic Polish documents.

Whether or not one applied the epithet ‘independent’, these notions were deeply tied to the specific Polish political situation of the nineteenth century, and were driven by unease with Polish Romantic Messianism, that mixture of feelings of heroism and suffering which Polish intellectuals had indulged in since Poland had disappeared from the political map in 1795. In contrast, the new generation of scholars was hostile to all kinds of excessive patriotism; in fact, all normativity was to be excluded and replaced by a new ideology, ‘Pozytywizm’, a special Polish adaptation of the French scientistic trend. The driving theme was: don’t aspire too high, to unreachable political goals, but improve and modernise the country economically and socially.

It even entailed a stress on what were seen as negative factors in Polish history which was to have implications in the new art historical evaluations, too, to be discussed further below.

A significant event was the founding, or rather, upgrading of the Towarzystwo Naukowe to the status of academy (Akademia Umiejętności, the term umiejętność meaning the same as nauka) in 1872/3. Politically this institution reflected again the optimal political combination; it was of the highest rank, created, recognised and to some extent administered from Vienna, and financed, partly at least, by the central state, too (other monies came from private local sources); hence the emperor himself came to the opening ceremony (Figure 4). At the same time its field of activity was purely local; Cracovians could see it as something of their own and as a Polish organisation; such a thing was at that time an impossibility in Russian Warsaw and Prussian Poznań. The new Academy was not even tied to the university any more, as the Towarzystwo had been. That said, its Cracow members were still mostly identical with the academics of that other institution. Akin to the university, the institution now acquired a considerable quantity of external trappings: a stately building, comfortably fitted out, lavish ceremonies and ornate garments. But Szujski, the Secretary, also admonished members that they were not just to sit around: ‘… we have not been sitting here to cloak our tasks in the dignity and the aura of academic titles… but to express our conviction that greater research … gives rise to a more multifaceted and more precise knowledge of a


phenomenon.’\textsuperscript{51} Szujski himself greatly shortened his life through overwork. The actual membership of the Academy was hardly larger than that of the Towarzystwa but the ‘output’ was to be very much greater.\textsuperscript{52} The furtherance of research and its publication was thus the one and only aim of the institution, which its members could pursue unencumbered. A new kind of academic person emerged, producing dozens, even hundreds of small and large specialised publications. In Cracow almost all of them were published in one or other of the institution’s serials. The Academy was now the place for ‘all scientific activity’ conducted in that field.\textsuperscript{53} Indeed, the institution was seen as the comprehensive repository, representing ‘all knowledge relating to Poland’.\textsuperscript{54}

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\caption{Ceremonial Inauguration of the Cracow Scientific Academy (Akademia Umiejętności) 1873 with the Emperor, Franz Joseph I. Watercolour Julisz Kossak, Courtesy PAU/PAN}
\end{figure}

In 1873 the art historians followed the historians in creating their own organisation within the Academy, the Commission of Art History (\textit{Komisja Historii Sztuki}). The initiative apparently came from Szujski.\textsuperscript{55} One of the principal organisers was Władysław Łuszczkiewicz. From 1877 onwards the \textit{Komisja} published expensive volumes, the \textit{Sprawozdania Komisyi do badania Historii Sztuki} (Reports of the Commission for the Study of Art History) (Figure 5). It was devoted to all fields of art history, and thus constituted one of the very first serials anywhere that was devoted purely to the subject (the Vienna \textit{Reperatorium für Kunstwissenschaft...}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Stanisław Smolka, \textit{Akademia Umiejętności w Krakowie 1873-1893}, Cracow, Nakładem Autora, 1894: ‘... gathered the whole of the scientific activity ...’, 91-92.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
started in 1877), though in effect the hefty volumes of this Cracow yearbook only appeared intermittently.

![The cover of the first volume of the Sprawozdania Komisyi do badania Historii Sztuki](image)

*Figure 5 The cover of the first volume of the Sprawozdania Komisyi do badania Historii Sztuki (Reports of the Commission for the Study of Art History)*

The last stepping stone in the formation of academic art history in Cracow was the installation of art history alongside archaeology as a recognised discipline in the Jagiellonian University. This began in 1879 with the creation of a lectureship ("prywatny docent") in the subject and was fully operative with a professorship in 1882. It helped greatly that the first incumbent was considered a major figure by any standards. As already emphasised, it was Maryan Sokolowski’s pupils and, in turn, their pupils who created and ensured the unique continuity and cohesion of Cracow art history. While for Łepkowski archaeology and art history, and certainly architectural history, still appeared congruent, art history now took its own course. Archaeology and prehistory now became more concerned with anthropological and material culture. In art history the preoccupation was now predominantly with the history of fine art, though it always included architecture. Soon Sokolowski’s major work, his multifaceted investigation of the Cracow altarpieces by the early Renaissance painter Hans Sues von Kulmbach measured up to anything that was written in Germany or Austria at the time. It was published in the Academy’s *Sprawozdania* in 1883, however, slowly it was the academics as members of the University Institute who became the generators of Cracow’s academic research and thus the mainstay of the ‘Cracow School’.

Apart from its academic research-orientated institutions, Cracow nurtured an astonishing number of other organisations devoted to art history. The arrangements and changing locations of the Muzeum Starożytności, a collection of antiquities and later of material culture, were of constant interest, though it remained an organisation of a somewhat shadowy existence. A major coup for Cracow was the arrival of the Czartoryski Collection, containing works by Raphael, Leonardo and Rembrandt, which opened in 1876; it was followed in 1879 by the Cracow National Museum (Muzeum Narodowe), the first of its kind in Polish lands, which mainly showed contemporary painting. The founding director of the Czartoryski was Łepkowski and that of the National Museum was Łuszczykiewicz. The task of teaching aesthetics and art history in the Fine Art School was assigned to the eminent philosopher at the University, Józef Kremer. Of major concern were the numerous conservation and restoration campaigns of the major monuments, such as St. Mary’s Church and the Sukiennice. Finally, both Łuszczykiewicz and Sokołowski maintained close contact with artists of the city, the former having been Matejko’s teacher, the latter a teacher of Cracow’s major painter-hero of the next generation, Stanisław Wyspiański. One may conclude that with this extraordinary concentration of individuals and organisations the whole town formed a single art historical institution.

The new art historical approaches in architectural history. The early work of Władysław Łuszczykiewicz

All that was now needed was the actual research. The lion’s share fell to Władysław Łuszczykiewicz. His investigations of Polish medieval architecture were to fill a very large proportion of the volumes of Sprawozdania even after his death in 1900. Like Łepkowski, an ‘ur-Cracovian,’ imbued with the ‘Cracow antiquarian world’, Łuszczykiewicz’s further upbringing was then somewhat more cosmopolitan, especially though his training as a painter in Paris in 1849. His principal job in Cracow was to teach painting at the Fine Art School, specialising in history subjects. From the 1860s onwards his activities became increasingly diverse and the list of his committee memberships, chairpersonships, vice-chairpersonships is astonishing (Figure 6).
On the title page of one of his many shorter publications, *Zabytki Dawnego Budownictwa w Krakowskiem* (Early Building Monuments in Cracow) of 1864-1868 Łuszczkiewicz proudly put ‘taken up, explained and edited / published [zabrał, objaśnił, wydał przez] by Władysław Łuszczkiewicz’. The initial finance for the work came from Paweł Popiel, a member of the Cracow nobility, researcher as well as benefactor. Neither its innocuous title nor its dozen or so plates (Figure 7) and short comments would entitle one to regard it as a major publication, but in its time it must have been of considerable significance. In the introduction Łuszczkiewicz refers to the Central Commission in Vienna, but with the German-language monopoly on writing about Cracow monuments in mind he stresses that a real understanding of the history of the region’s old building can only be expected to

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come from a local researcher. He may also have had in mind something like the remark by the Austrian Baudirektor Dr. Schenkl, to the effect that the countryside around Cracow offered almost nothing of interest. The buildings chosen by Łuszczkiewicz from the surroundings of Cracow were indeed fairly modest ones though they do underline a certain diversity, castles, monasteries and parish churches. They are sharply drawn and neatly presented on very large plates.

Figure 7 Illustration of the Benedictine Monastery at Staniątki near Cracow from Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, Zabytki Dawnego Budownictwa w Krakowskim, 1st instalment, 1864, 2nd and 3rd 1866, 4th 1867, Cracow: Czas.

61 ‘Bo aby znaleźć klucz do rozwiązywania zagadek budowy, trzeba być miejscowym, bo poznać tradycje do ruin przyparte, lub umieć pytać tych, co pamiętali dawniesze czasy, trzeba na gruncie rozpoznać dane, tak moralne jak materialne, co kierowały myśl budowy; czego obcy nie zrobi.’ ‘To find the key that solves the secret of a building, one has to be a local, to know the tradition of the ruin one is looking at, or to know how to ask those who remember old times, one has to know the basic conditions, moral as well material, which directed the ways of building; foreigners don’t do that,’ Łuszczkiewicz, Zabytki Dawnego Budownictwa w Krakowskim, 2; see the review in Józef Łepkowski, O Zabytkach Kruszwicy, Gniezna i Krakowa…, Cracow: Czas 1866 (publ. in Czas [Kraków] 1862, 375.

62 ‘Das flache Land bietet fast nichts, was der Erwähnung wert wäre,’ Dr. Schenkel, ‘Über die Baudenkmale des Krakauer Verwaltungsgebiets’, Mittheilungen, 1: 9, September 1856, 181-183.
Łuszczkiewicz was no doubt acutely mindful of Szujski’s empiricist maxims of truthfulness and the need to care for the smallest detail. The Cracow authorities’ tendency to publish ‘skazówki’, short tracts with hints on how to do research, begun by the Towarzystwo Naukowe in 1850, was continued by Łepkowski and Łuszczkiewicz into the 1870s. Łuszczkiewicz, like Łepkowski tends to elaborate on what is to be avoided: first and foremost all poetic language and all words of rapture.63 Neither is there room for polemics of the kind that were so often conducted among archaeologists; one has simply to determine, he argued, which parts of a monument were authentic and original, and which came later. These booklets were ostensibly aimed at a general audience, yet simplified research into, for instance, Gothic vaulting systems could never be an option.64

A much desired in-depth study by Cracovian researchers appeared in 1867 under the auspices of the Towarzystwo Naukowe, and it was dedicated to the University. The two volumes on the twelfth and thirteenth-century Cistercian Monastery of Mogiła near Cracow (Figure 8) were duly dubbed the Society’s ‘milestone of the most recent historiography.’65 The first word of the title, Monografia indicates the decisive methodological step taken; all 400 pages are devoted a single monument. The subtitle, ‘in the village Mogiła’, also drives home the belief that works of Polish art and history could be found in the ordinary Polish countryside.

The whole is in fact the fruit of a co-operative venture, combining quite diverse sections, principally written by historians; half of the work is taken up by the publication of documents. It begins with a short and friendly geographical sketch. Then Józef Szujski provides a chronicle of the institution, dealing also more broadly with monasticism, reaching towards wider socio-political considerations. Szujski is then followed by his colleague Łuszczkiewicz with his 45 page-long ‘Część Artystyczna Monografii’ (‘The artistic part of the monograph’). One may assume that the work arose from the decision of the two scholars to co-operate. However, with his title, Łuszczkiewicz also intends to mark the distinctiveness of his pursuits. While recurrently using the words ‘sztuka’ and ‘piękny’, ‘art’ and ‘beautiful’, Łuszczkiewicz is also aware of the fact that the church (Figure 9) and the monastic buildings of Mogiła do not count exactly among Poland’s best-preserved medieval architecture, and he indicates that this may be seen as a challenge by some lovers of


64 Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, Zabytki Sztuk Pięknych Krakowa, I. Pomniki Architektury …, Cracow: L.Paszkowski, 1872, 5- 7, 36.

art, yet he concludes with the comment ‘… today however we bow again before its chipped walls’.66

Figure 8 Title page of Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie, ed., Monografia Opactwa Cysterców we wsi Mogile. Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867.

Figure 9 Illustration of the east end of the church of Mogila, from Monografia Opactwa Cysterców we wsi Mogile, 8.

It was characteristic of many writings on an art historical subject to begin with a general overview of the whole of the history of art. Łuszczkiewicz wants to come across as an ardent medievalist who feels that the general public still needs convincing of the period’s values. More than half of his text is then taken up by a broad history of early monasticism in general and of the Cistercians in particular with their complex plans for their monasteries and abbeys. It is as if he wanted a whole chunk of European Medieval civilisation to come down on the little Polish village. To try and counter his indebtedness to Western, mainly French, literature he comes up with a little sideswipe against ‘today’s German protestant authors who don’t much deal with this ……’. 67 In the end, Łuszczkiewicz’s general aim in presenting all this is simple: to demonstrate ‘the importance of monastic architecture to the history of art’. 68

When Łuszczkiewicz finally comes to the actual object of enquiry, he takes pains to underline its ‘artistic’ character throughout; the building’s ‘beauty lies in the lines and proportioning of the its interior’, as well as in the careful handling of the materials. 69 The principal analysis deals with the partially preserved vaulting system, giving details of shafts, bases and capitals. Łuszczkiewicz attempts a Viollet-le Duc-derived understanding of the fabric as a whole. Another task, one that concerns exclusively the art historian, is to arrive at a plausible labelling as regards style. He identifies Mogiła, like so many Cistercian churches of its period, as sitting between Romanesque and Early Gothic. 70 Finally, the discussion of Mogiła’s monastic buildings is much more concerned with the history of use, and Łuszczkiewicz aims for comprehensive description.

Łuszczkiewicz saw it as one of his principal tasks to undertake the same in-depth research for all mid-medieval churches in Poland. His next monograph on the monastery of Sulejów of 1877 is much shorter but no less incisive and complete. It marks the beginning of the first volume of the Academy’s Sprawozdania. A monograph is a single-authored work, by somebody who comes across with a self-assured, yet discursive tone. The whole is accompanied by many more illustrations than the Mogiła volume (Figure 10), all from the author’s own hand of course. Łuszczkiewicz begins with a friendly piece on the atmosphere of a small Polish town: ‘whitewashed wooden cottages … among the trees … the tower of the parish church (…) the landscape is pretty, [it is] our own’. 71 The art historian himself

67 [ed. by Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie], Monografia Opactwa Cysterców we wsi Mogile, Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867, 28.
68 [ed. by Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie], Monografia Opactwa Cysterców we wsi Mogile, Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867, 37.
69 ‘Piękność leżąca w liniach i proporcjach budowy wewnątrz …’, [ed. by Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie], Monografia Opactwa Cysterców we wsi Mogile, Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867, 52.
Supplies the history, but not a complete chronicle, only those elements which serve directly his art historical purposes.\textsuperscript{72} In principle the art historian welcomes any useful historical information, especially precise dates, but documents are not indispensable; one can arrive at dates purely through stylistic evidence.\textsuperscript{73} The real art historical equivalent to the historian’s scrutiny of written sources is the description of the physical evidence.\textsuperscript{74} In the case of Sulejów there was a prior advantage, for it is a richer and better preserved building than Mogiła. The analysis of the vaulting system is now sharpened, as is the handling of the stylistic nomenclature and the precision of the illustrations (Figure 11). The conclusion of these ‘artistic studies of architecture’ (\textit{studia artystyczne architektury})\textsuperscript{75} is surprisingly brief, almost non-existent. A new trait, hardly noticeable in the Mogiła volume, is the frequent posing of questions, especially as regards dates. By the end one is left with a typical empiricist refrain: much more research is needed.\textsuperscript{76}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure10.jpg}
\caption{Illustrations of the Cistercian Monastery of Sulejów from Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, ‘Opactwo Cysterskie Sulejowskie. Pomnik architetury xiii-go wieku’, \textit{Sprawozdania Komisji Historyi Sztuki w Polsce}, 1, 1877 (publ. 1879), Zeszyt 1, 2-24.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{72} Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, ‘Opactwo Cysterskie Sulejowskie. Pomnik architetury xiii-go wieku’, \textit{Sprawozdania Komisji Historyi Sztuki w Polsce}, 1, 1877 (publ. 1879), Zeszyt 1, 2-24 (6).
\textsuperscript{73} Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, \textit{Zabytki Sztuk Pięknych Krakowa}, I. Pomniki Architektury …, Cracow L. Paszkowskiego, 1872, 9-10.
\textsuperscript{75} \textit{Sprawozdania Komisji Historyi Sztuki w Polsce}, 1, 1877 (publ. 1879), Zeszyt 1, 8.
\textsuperscript{76} Sprawa to późniejsza … it is the task for later [research], \textit{Sprawozdania Komisji Historyi Sztuki w Polsce}, 1, 1877 (publ. 1879), Zeszyt 1, 24.
Łuszczkiewicz’s other principal architectural pursuit was a much narrower issue. German architectural historians tended to subsume brick churches in Cracow under the stylistic heading ‘wiślano-baltycki’ (Vistula-Baltic). Łuszczkiewicz, however, emphasised that Cracow differed because here freestone, and not brick, was used for the decorative parts. Another key feature was the absence of external buttresses in basilical elevations; the main support for the high vaults, for instance in St. Mary’s Church, is provided by piers at the back of the pillars of the arcade. Łuszczkiewicz reported on this in a discussion in the Academy in 1881, in answer to an official question: ‘Do the fourteenth-century constructions in Gothic Cracow constitute a Polish Gothic speciality?’ Łuszczkiewicz avoided answering this question directly, however, and merely held that certain forms were valid for a specific locality. What counted was exact observation alone.  

 López 2007. The Cracow school of modern art history: the creation of a method and an institution 1850-1880

Figure 11 Church at Łęczyca (Tum): illustration from F. M. Sobieszański, Wiadomości Historyczne o Sztukach Pięknych w dawnej Polsce, Vol. 1 Warsaw Orgelbrand 1847, left, compared with Łuszczkiewicz’s illustration (Sprawozdania Komisji Historyi Sztuki, vol 2 1881 pl xxx), right.

Slowly, from around 1850 onwards, the term ‘historia sztuki’ (history of art) gained currency.\textsuperscript{78} Earlier, the most commonly used term was ‘sztuka piękna’ (fine [beautiful] art); in his analysis of Mogiła Łuszczkiewicz headed one section with: ‘On the contribution of the monastic cells to the history of the fine arts’.\textsuperscript{79} Many of his contemporaries would no doubt have preferred to place the analysis of the buildings of Mogiła under the heading archaeology. It was special pleading by medievalists, backed by the authoritative discourses of a Viollet le Duc, that helped to incorporate these quite harsh-looking buildings into the ‘history of art’, where they have since remained. It has been a determining issue in Central European art history since that architectural history was firmly put under the wings of a subject which also comprised all fine art painting and sculpture.

Emphasis on ‘faktyczna pewność’, ‘factual certainty,’ perhaps most aptly sums up the new ethos of the modern art historian.\textsuperscript{80} Recent German work on the history of 19\textsuperscript{th} century art historiography has thrown much new light on this crucial phase of the subject’s development from the 1840s to 1880s. It was during that time that art history formulated its essential aims, which have dominated the discipline during the twentieth century; it also coincided with its institutionalisation at the universities which we still take for granted. This has become an agreed narrative in most histories of the discipline. More recently, however, the situation in the final decades of the nineteenth century is seen as having been somewhat more complex. New studies by Gabriele Bickendorf, Hubert Locher, Regine Prange, Johannes Rössler and Henrik Karge of German art history during this period present it as having been characterised by a double phenomenon.\textsuperscript{81}

Apart from the ‘Empirieschub’, the massive push for empirical data, which had to be dealt with the utmost accuracy, there was also the strong sense of ‘art’ as constituting a separate world, which also meant a continuation of the art philosophy of German Idealism and Romanticism, of Schelling’s identification of art with the absolute and Hegel’s thinking in terms of a system of historical necessity, all acting as the permanent metaphysical underpinning of the subject. Regine Prange, in particular, maintains that this applies to all the major art historical work of the

\textsuperscript{78} E.g. in Karol Kremer, Niektóre uwagi o ważności zabytków sztuk pięknych na naszej ziemi, \textit{Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego [Kraków]}, 4 [new series], 1849, 546-560.

\textsuperscript{79} ‘O zasłudze klasztorna\’cej w historii sztuk pięknych’, [ed. by Towarzystwo Naukowe Krakowskie], \textit{Monografia Opactwa Cystersów we wsi Mogile}, Cracow: Uniwersytet Jagielloński, 1867, 28.


period, however forcefully authors such as Eitelberger or Łuszczkiewicz rejected ‘aesthetic speculation’. The very insistence on ‘values of art’ constituted an essentialism that kept renewing itself, and the stress on the art in art history, its emancipation as a subject in its own right is proof of this essentialism. Long ago the historian of aesthetics, Stefan Morawski, held that Poland’s art historians likewise ‘needed’ the aspirations of the aesthetic philosophers. A quip by Łepkowski in 1862 may be offered in this context: ‘Aesthetics relates to the history of art as psychology relates to the physiology of man, or as the philosophy of history relates to the actual events. Philosophy or, better, aesthetics, bring forth the ideas of beauty from art history, while archaeology marks out the signs of the schools, the century, and the ritual influences’.

A notable development was the concentration on the single work of art itself and on its essentialised unity; Łuszczkiewicz’s monograph on Mogiła, for example, was considered ‘an enormous step forward’. The number of observations and insights generated by one building must have surprised many of contemporaries. Most of these resulted from visual analysis. As one subsequent commentator has noted, ‘Łuszczkiewicz never wrote about a building he had not seen’. It was then axiomatic that after close observation one should proceed by comparing the work to other works, equally closely inspected.

Beyond amassing details analysis involved the task of reaching some overall rationale for the building, including determination of the factors that gave it cohesion and completeness. For the medievalist architectural historian this was primarily the system of vaulting with its supports, formulated most famously by Viollet le Duc (and before him, in much less detail by Pugin). Accordingly, Łuszczkiewicz argued, in the Gothic epoch ‘as in classic Greek art, beauty results from the principles of construction which directs outlines and details’; for Łuszczkiewicz it was ‘the feeling for lines’ that provided the basis for this appreciation.

As a medievalist Łuszczkiewicz’s interests stretched to the early Polish Renaissance but, like many of his contemporaries, he remained contemptuous of the Baroque.
Much later this concentration on the individual object would be criticised with, it must be admitted, a particularly apt Polish word, ‘faktografia’, denoting an immersion in facts that was seen as synonymous with a lack of thought and originality. For Łuszczkiewicz and his colleagues such a reproach would have seemed absurd. Indeed, when looking at Polish art history as a whole, one might rather see the endless morsels of information unearthed by art historians of the previous generation such as Grabowski and Sobieszczański, as faktografia - contrasting as they did with the contemporary highly reflexive and fluent art writing by Józef Kremer, for whom, initially, at least, material facts were almost non-existent.

What Łuszczkiewicz and his contemporaries presented was a combination of an empiricist approach and rationalist maxims. These facts and analyses were presented in a very distinctive form: the monograph. At that time this genre of writing could by no means be taken for granted – hence the title of the work on Mogiła included the term. A monograph is above all an attempt at balancing many diverse factors, often taken from diverse disciplines. The other genre of presentation was the large synthesis, but this did not come about. Would it not have been something most desirable at that time, a conspectus of Polish art, providing a bridge across the borders of a bitterly divided country? Moreover, would it not have formed an ideal task for the Academy, reputed to be the place holding the ‘entire knowledge of Poland’? No doubt all this must have been an issue that was discussed. Indeed, historians in Cracow were making some attempts to provide exactly that. But in 1869 Łuszczkiewicz maintained: we are simply not yet in a position to proceed that far. Works did exist that offered a wide scope, but they contained just a collection of facts (many of them seemingly unsubstantiated), such as those by Sobieszczański, and there were the comprehensive but often vague speculations of Kraszewski. The first proper overview of Polish art appeared only in the 1930s. Indeed, the time for syntheses in art history was never an optimal one.

In Germany the new art history was said to have begun with Kugler’s massive surveys. But it was their very comprehensiveness that caused them to age so quickly and by the late 1860s they were held to be not synopses or syntheses, but surveys or handbooks, and thus they ranked below proper original research. It was the monograph on a newly analysed work or monument that carried the reputation of the profession.

While the older more philosophical and aesthetic approach in art history still tended towards universal conceptions of the development of art, the new empiricism seemed to favour more national classifications of art. In Poland this applied more strongly than in many other countries. Virtually all early Polish art historiography dealt with Poland, compared with that by, say, Viennese authors or that of German art historians, who were so heavily oriented towards Italy. But the national emphasis became the subject of complex arguments. Before the mid-nineteenth century Cracow antiquarians tended to identify themselves directly with Polish history, rehashing notions of memory and souvenir objects, ‘… worshipping the memory of the holy past’, as Karol Kremer stated at the conclusion of his lecture in 1849. But Kremer was also hinting much more soberly at the European context, dubbed as ‘east’ and ‘west’.  

By the late nineteenth century academics were roundly condemning the earlier ‘faulty conception of patriotism’. Such criticisms were articulated, however, precisely at a time of rapid growth in Polish studies of all kinds, where they had previously been completely absent in Cracow (or, for that matter, anywhere else in Poland). This was largely due to pressures from the ruling powers and hence historians’ studies of their country had to be conducted in a very different way, namely critically. Szujski’s chief maxim was to keep ‘nauka’ (science) and patriotism separate. This even meant that negative factors could and had to be investigated, too. One subgroup of historians called themselves the ‘Stańczyks’, after the name of a jester in the Royal Court in the seventeenth century who was warning his masters of the dangers of their optimism. In 1862 Jan Matejko provided a striking visualisation of the jester sitting (Figure 12), pondering Poland’s fate while in the background the Royal celebrations of some victory were going on. Basically the Stańczyks believed that Poland’s ruin was partly caused by the Poles themselves and, as the Bible said: ‘to recognise the truth frees you’.

Art historians could hardly take on such a view directly, but it may lie behind Łuszczkiewicz’s advocacy of the exploration of lesser monuments, a maxim he kept to with great intensity. One reason was that by the end of the 1860s the major monuments of Cracow had already been the object of much research, but it

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95 Czczących pamięć święta przeszłości,’ Karol Kremer, ‘Niekótoē uwagi o ważności zabytków sztuk pięknych na naszej ziemi’, Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego [Kraków], 4 [new series], 1849, 546-560 (560).
may also be a reflection of the self-critical attitude fostered by the Stańczyks. He began to argue for a strange kind of downgrading, asserting that ‘Not all countries possess masterworks / arcydzieła’\(^\text{99}\) or that ‘our Gothic works are not like the masterworks abroad’.\(^\text{100}\) It must have been Łuszczkiewicz, too, who put forward this view most squarely in the important short introduction to the first volume of Sprawozdania in 1877, which states that ‘… we have to convince specialists that (…) we do not possess first-ranking masterworks’. He immediately carries on in a consoling way, mixing caution with praise: ‘we do have in any case a considerable number of such works of art from the epochs (…) in which the feeling for beauty shows itself and becomes apparent as the fruit of a special character, which may serve for the characterisation of epochs of art in the history of this special earth, on which Poland was situated.’\(^\text{101}\)

![Figure 12 Jan Matejko, Stańczyk, Warsaw Muzeum Narodowe (1862).](image)

Art in Poland remained the primary subject matter of the Cracow School until 1918, and much of that was devoted to Cracow itself. After the First World War Polish topics still predominated, and to a lesser extent in the first few decades after the Second World War as well. For Adam Bochnak, a central figure who took the

\(^{99}\) Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, Zabytki Dawnego Budownictwa w Krakowskim, 1st instalment, 1864, Cracow: Czas, [Introduction].


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ethos of the School from the earlier twentieth century into its second half, the study of foreign art was always linked to the study of Polish art and that of Cracow in particular. At the same time, all Cracow academics eagerly studied the professional literature published elsewhere in Europe. Students at the University’s art history department were taught thoroughly most major chapters in European art. For the Cracow art historians the monuments of Poland could not be explained without placing them into their European context and Łuszczkiewicz used German and French architectural terms, variously translating them or leaving them as they were.

Hence, one might reconsider the logic of Polish art historians’ position: it was the act of fitting Polish buildings into a Western European framework that served to counter foreigners’ accusation of inferiority, or even of the complete absence of work of any value, as stated by the haughty Schnaase. The research on Poland’s Cistercian churches, in particular, was intended to demonstrate that they belonged to Europe’s heritage of monastic and architectural elite buildings. Łuszczkiewicz put it explicitly: ‘If the early rise of Romanesque architecture is a sign of a higher culture of a country, in the eleventh and twelfth century, in that case, as there are numerous Romanesque buildings in Poland, we have a right to count ourselves into this culture’.

In the final decades of the nineteenth another facet of art history came to the fore. With the new scholarly ethos and stress on the highest academic values it was increasingly seen as necessary to address the wider non-academic public. At the time of Grabowski such a division between academic and non-academic had not yet been articulated, but it was implicitly voiced in Eitelberger’s pronouncements in the 1850s. The simpler ways of compiling information were now used for guidebooks, which came out in ever increasing numbers. The Towarzystwo Miłosników Historii i Zabytków (Society of the Lovers of History and Monuments), formed in 1896, carried the popular element in its name: ‘Miłośników’ ([art] lovers). The term thus reappeared some decades after academic art historians had tried to side-line precisely those ‘art lovers’. A new and growing sphere also emerged that fitted in with notions of the popular as well as with the national: the vernacular architecture of the countryside. Karol Kremer had briefly referred to this genre of building in 1849 as unequivocally Polish, and thus contrasted it with the wider European relationships in the case of ‘polite’ architecture.

The local peasant culture, too, became increasingly studied in more precise ways, beginning with the activities of the painter and writer Stanisław Witkiewicz in the later 1880s. To some extent this was indicative of a more general change of political or ideological perspectives,

104 E.g. ‘Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, ‘Kilka słów o naszym budownictwie w epoce ostrołukowej’, Przegląd Techniczny [Warsaw], 24: 3, Marzec / March 1887, 55.
106 Note 104 Karol Kremer, ‘Niekööre uwagi o ważności zabytków sztuk pięknych na naszej ziemi’, Rocznik Towarzystwa Naukowego [Kraków], 4 [new series], 1849, 546-560 (555-6).
namely the identification of the nation principally with the ‘lud,’ the popular mass, ‘the whole’ of the people. By and large, however, the fraternity of academic art historians in Cracow kept aloof from this movement. Consequently they never fully recognised the singular figure of the early twentieth century, the architect-cum-architectural historian Jan Sas Zubrzycki (1860-1935), who with great fervour and in a frequently polemical way tried to argue that all medieval buildings in Poland were essentially ‘Polish’.

One major issue not yet discussed was the High Altar in St. Mary’s church. As a single art work it was valued more highly than anything else in Cracow. Until the early 1900s it elicited major clashes among its interpreters: between popular-national and academic-internationalist positions. It was Grabowski who had, very early on, discovered the name Veit Stoss. This then became polonized into Wit Stwosz. According to Grabowski ‘Stwosz’ was a Pole, a native of Cracow who had also worked for a time in Nuremberg, and not a German who had worked for a time in Cracow. It is not clear when the first clash of these positions occurred. In 1868 Łuszczkiewicz held forth on the altar, where he treaded a very cautious line. Mindful of his demand to avoid any kind of effusiveness he began with a reminder that evaluations of even the greatest works of are subject to change. He then devoted himself to a great number of aspects such as iconography, the material, the style of decoration, but omitted the issue of nationality. In 1912-1913, however, the controversy broke out fully again with a tract by the artist and journalist, Ludwik Stasiak arguing for the Polish identity of Stwosz, only to be followed by a long and patient denial by Professor Tadeusz Szydłowski, a pupil of Sokołowski. A deep division appears to have run between a seemingly straightforward ‘popular’ nationalism and the Cracow academics who saw it as their duty to research Polish art, but under the wider transnational umbrella.

Conclusion

At the very end, therefore, we return once again to the question of the ‘Cracow School’. ‘What exactly is it that creates a school?’ asked Tadeusz Mańkowski, a prominent Cracow art historian in 1964. It is something, he argued, that occurs when the pupils of a professor, for example, Sokołowski, reflect on the bonds which link them with that ‘master’. But it can hardly have meant that the master imparted something like his own ‘hallmark’ to his pupils. Sokołowski’s principal task, Mańkowski suggested, had been to ‘lift Polish art history to the European level’.

108 Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, O treści rzeźb ołtarza wielkiego w Kościele Panny Maryi w Krakowie, Cracow: Drukarnia Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 186.
109 Ludwik Stasiak, Rewyndykacje własności naszej, Cracow: Gebethner 1911; Tadeusz Szydłowski, Wit Stwosz w Światle naukowych i pseudo-naukowych badań, Cracow: Gebethner, 1913. Stasiak did not raise the issue again after Szydłowski’s rebuttal.
One of the aims of this article has been to confirm such a remark. Whether or not the Cracow School generated something that was specific to Cracow, a ‘Cracow method’, to answer such a question more precisely would require a much more thorough study of many of the texts produced by Cracow scholars and their foreign colleagues.

The sense of stability as regards teaching and the sheer physical community within the university and the other institutions cannot be left out from the definition of a ‘school’. The sense was underlined in numerous articles and books on the history of the School which always stressed continuity. The life of the school was, and still is, regulated by an elaborate system of rankings and rituals. Ever present was the desire to give and receive praise. A few members were singled out and received the informal title ‘mistrz / Master’, under a cult ‘auptytetów mistrzów.’ Sokolowski was counted amongst them as was, more recently, Lech Kalinowski (1920-2004).\(^{111}\) The special form in which such qualities were identified was the elaborate obituaries. The principal values were ‘work’ and ‘truth’, two terms which had been foregrounded at least since the pronouncements of Józef Szujski. But these values could easily reach out to even more general words of praise. Thus Adam Bochnak, a prominent representative of the School in the mid twentieth century, could praise ‘… the perfection of the scientific methods, the enormous [degree] of exactitude and precision …’ of his teacher Julian Pagaszewski (who was Sokolowski’s favourite pupil and successor in the chair).\(^{112}\) Bochnak himself was praised for the precision of his work: ‘Owing to [his] unusual erudition he could spot the smallest factual mistake, catch the smallest error …’\(^{113}\) According to his pupil, Adam Malikiewicz, Bochnak was the ‘great continuator’ of the School, outstanding in his adherence to ‘professional ethics’ and to ‘honesty in his research’; ‘his moral stance provided support for colleagues and students’:\(^{114}\) In his most recent summary Malikiewicz concludes: ‘it appears to be characteristic of the scholars of Cracow that they endeavour to apply any kind of research method correctly and in a sound way.’\(^{115}\)

There remain other issues that require further reflection. Should Cracow art history not be called ‘provincial’? Very eminent Polish scholars have suggested that


all Polish art itself is ‘provincial’. Has this article not also demonstrated that Polish art history writing is ‘derivative’? The two issues are intimately interrelated. Only some very sketchy thoughts can be offered here. Firstly, regarding the actual works: it is the task of art history to continue dealing with the long-known, celebrated European masterworks, of which, by definition, there are comparatively few but it is also its task to extend our appreciation by creating attention for ‘new’ masterworks. To assess what Polish art history has done in this respect would require much further investigation.

Beyond the ‘appreciation’ of individual works, art history is concerned with a more structural understanding of whole complexes of art production. To stay with the principal monuments discussed here, the Polish Cistercian monasteries: we can choose between declaring them as ‘provincial and peripheral derivatives’ of Citeaux and Morimond, or we can stress one of the principal aims of the European Cistercian movement, namely to penetrate the very borderlands of Western Christianity, which makes the definition ‘centre - periphery’ redundant. It then makes no sense any more to call any of the order’s buildings ‘provincial’, as they all form a crucial part of a European whole.

In their Introductions to the latest volume devoted to the history of art history in Central and East Central Europe, Wojciech Bałus and Małkiewicz, the most senior members of the Institute of Art History in Cracow write of ‘centres and peripheries’ and of ‘a certain provincialism’. But such judgements must be treated as severely relative, too.\textsuperscript{116} Again, further research is needed into both Polish art history writing and that produced elsewhere so as to establish more precisely methodological originalities and dependencies. But here, too, a more structural view can be taken by investigating the circumstances surrounding the creation of the new Polish art history. Politically, for better or worse, Poland was, during much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, located in the very centre of affairs. For the social historian the notion of provinciality arguably has far less meaning and for the anthropologist hardly any. As regards the creation of a new institution one may differentiate here between locations with an established institutionality, and, crucially, locations which were in possession of their cultural sovereignty, such as the German university towns, with the opposite, with the creation of a strong academic institutionality virtually out of nothing, or even within adverse political conditions. In that sense, the Cracow School of Art History was probably unique.
