

## State of Art - Poland

### A Brief History of a Development of Polish Conservation Idea

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On the beginning I would like to present a brief history of the protection of monuments in Poland. As in other Central European countries the protection of cultural monuments in Poland in the 1945-1985 was involved in a specific way with the socio-political phenomena. The latter determined the creation and activity of mechanisms of protection, and influenced the theory and practices of conservation.

The foundations of the state creative and, as a result, didactic and ethical impact of the material testimony of the past appeared in anti-quality, above all, within the Mediterranean culture. Initially, concern for the preservation of monumental buildings and with time also establishment of museums and collections constituted means for elevating the prestige of the state and founders, and commenced the legal protection of relics. Criteria of the value of artworks and architecture were subjected to the requirements of politics, and acted as a destructive instrument applied against the enemies of the state. Works of Art became the trophies of war.

The Polish monarchs of the Renaissance period exploited the Italian models and favored the creation of collections. In 1571 Sigismund August bequeathed a collection of tapestries to the Commonwealth. Wladyslaw IV established in Warsaw a collection of antique sculptures, partially pillaged by the Swedish armies. It was precisely Sweden which in the seventeenth century was the scene of a development of European conservation theory and praxis. In 1630 Gustavus II Adolphus issued an instruction concerning inventories of monuments by the state conservation office, and engaged himself in the organization of an effectual amassment of works of Art considered wartime loot from Central Europe.

In Poland an essential contribution to the growing interest in ancient Art was made by Szymon Starowolski's "Monumenta Sarmatorum" (1655). The Cracow synod of 1621 ordered all parish priests to repair old paintings if they were in a suitable condition. At the end of the eighteenth century, I. Krasicki, the bishop of Varmia and a celebrated poet, proclaimed his support for respecting the authenticity of Gothic buildings, and negatively assessed the Late Baroque and Rococo. King Stanislaw August also cultivated an historical-cognitive attitude, and acted as a patron of Polish artists, men of letters and antiquaries. In 1775 M.Mniszech prepared a project for a Musaeum Polonicum. The term "national" became a valuable component in the evaluation of a given monument, and took on a more profound meaning after the loss of Polish statehood. Concern for Wawel Castle and the restoration of the Warsaw Cathedral in the years 1836-1840 referred to the splendid past of the Polish monarchy. A hundred years later, the extensive collection of National and European works of Art found itself in Cracow, where it became the core of the exhibits displayed in local museums. P.Aigner proposed to reconstruct the Gothic- Renaissance Cloth Hall in Cracow in the manner of an ancient temple. Already in 1830, the restoration of Wawel Castle showed respect for the stylistic variety of different eras. T.Dzialynski gathered a sizable collection of artworks from the reign of the Jagiellonian dynasty, and rebuilt the castle in Kórnik, which housed it, in a more suitable neo-Gothic style. In 1827 an inventory of monuments was initiated in the Russian Partition, and realized by K.Stronczynski in the years 1844-1855. The Cracow milieu enjoyed the greatest freedom in all the Polish lands as regards the cultivation of National traditions and the development of the theory of conservation and the history of

art. Gothicization and stylistic purism were questioned, but authenticity was still treated subjectively.

The turn of the nineteenth century brought about numerous societies of friends of old towns and entire regions. The same patriotic current reacted to neo-historicism by opting for modernism, which showed regard for the past and historical elements, but overpowered it with new forms of expression as in the case of the project of rebuilding Wawel Hill in the style of the Acropolis (St. Wyspiarski and W. Ekielski, 1906). Theoretical bases for conservation were molded in accordance with the proposal made by A. Riegel who stressed respect for the historical substance (S. Tornkowicz, 1901, L. Puszet, 1901, K. Lanckoronski, 1907, the First Convention of the Society for the Protection of Monuments in Warsaw, 1909). Attention was drawn to old urban plans. The destruction of Kalisz, the oldest town in Poland, in 1914 by the Prussian army was treated as a blow dealt consciously against native culture. A decree issued by the Regency Council in 1918 "On the Protection of the Monuments of Culture and Art" was one of the first legal acts of the Polish state, reborn after 150 of servitude. Approval was expressed for the necessity of reconstructing historical edifices, damaged during the war, and for "historical restorations" which reinstated "previous appearance". Austrian and Russian additions were removed from elevations, and Russian Orthodox churches were pulled down. In theory, the historical worth of entire buildings and historical towns was appreciated but in practice restoration involved predominantly the external facade, embellished with additional ornaments (the Old Town Marketplace in Warsaw, 1928) or reduced to earlier forms (the Romanesque collegiate church in Tum) or else it documented the stages in stylistic development and various strata by means of architectonic "uncovering" (the castles in Warsaw, Toruń and Lublin). Scientific research conducted for the needs of conservation, especially architectonic and ethnographic investigations, was greatly expanded.

During World War II mass-scale destruction and the plunder of Polish cultural heritage which was taken to Germany intensified the treatment of the preservation of monuments as a patriotic mission. Losses of relics in historical towns amounted to over 50 percent, and up to 43 percent of all the cultural property. Further losses were brought about by the new conceptions of the political-social system of the state. The nationalization of landed estates, in particular, left several thousand residences, palaces and manors together with their parks and outbuildings, often with richly outfitted interiors, collections of artworks, family souvenirs, archives and libraries, to their own fate.

Already on 30 July 1945 Jan Zachwatowicz, the General Conservator of Historical Monuments presented a program for the protection of monuments. The dimension of the losses was the reason why a full reconstruction of the most valuable monuments was accepted to be the only possible procedure. This decision was made consciously as the outcome of a responsibility towards future generations, and as a response to social anticipations. Only those monuments which "were part of Nature, a sign of the victory of Nature over man" were to remain as ruins. Historical buildings were to be returned to the nation as a valuable instrument for shaping the life and mentality of generations. Adaptation and the selection of functions and users were perceived as measures for protecting against future deformations of the given object.

Patriotic feelings justified deviations from the conservation principles. In a discussion on the reconstruction of the Old Town in Warsaw, such patriotic motivation produced a proposal to leave the ruins as a silent witness-monument of the town's tragedy (K. Wyka); it was suggested to reject the past and to create a totally modern town with a monument to "the shame of Nazi barbarity" in the form of a giant pyramid of ruins (J. Wiland). The attitude towards historical relics based on patriotic emotions was accepted by the authorities and by the majority of society. It also produced certain negative effects such as indifference or even animosity towards the German and Ukrainian cultural heritage, distant from political principles.

K. Piwocki was an adherent of a much more limited program of reconstruction which assumed that it was impossible to create a copy identical to the original. He applied this view mainly towards the building interiors which should be adapted to new needs. B. Marconi, a

conservator of paintings, returned to the conception proposed by A.Riegel, and maintained that the reconstructed work of Art will not take on greater artistic value but lose its worth as a document.

A creative and, in contrast, faithful restoration of buildings was the topic of controversies about the final shape of historical relics and their function. The socialist state demanded a suitable setting. It was planned to turn Wawel Castle into a new pantheon for mass-scale meetings. This idea was embodied in the socialist realistic decorations of the square raised in the Old Town in Lublin. Generally speaking, restoration and reconstruction for all practical purposes dominated in architecture and sculpture, while other works of Art were subjected to processes of conservation.

The organization of the protection of monuments was subjected to a centrally steered state administration. The Chief Director's Office of Museums and the Protection of Monuments, headed by St.Lorenz, concentrated in Warsaw many specialists who worked all over the country. All decisions and funds came from the capital. Up to the 1960s projects of conservation undertakings concerning more important monuments of architecture or town planning were confirmed centrally. A great importance was attached to the revindication of lost works of Art and to scientific research and inventories. A significant function of the Office was collecting abandoned works of Art, without guardians, a task which was well served by a single system of the management of museum and conservation issues. The Director's Office nominated voivodship conservators and heads of state museums.

All told, several thousand monuments of architecture and a number of old towns were rebuilt, despite the fact that this process took place in a situation of an extreme biological and economic exhaustion of the country. The decisive factor was the universal will to restore lost historical symbols. In 1945 alone, about 400 historical buildings were protected and rebuilt, in around 250 localities. A year later the number rose to some 600 objects. The scale of investments and needs exceeded the staff organizational possibilities of the conservation services and the state budget. The majority of the Old Town centers suffered during the war; some lost only part of their buildings (Poznań, and Wroclaw -about 60 percent, Opole, Bydgoszcz) but in many cases the losses reached over 90 percent (Warsaw, Gdańsk, Szczecin, Malbork, Koszalin, Kołobrzeg, and several core smaller towns, mainly in Western and Northern Poland). The reconstruction of the historical districts of Warsaw was based on interdisciplinary cooperation, and, above all, strove towards a faithful reconstruction of elements which came into being after 1850. The height of houses built after that date was corrected. The authorities resigned from most of the single-storey houses, which were replaced with parks. The reconstruction of the Main Town in Gdańsk followed a similar pattern; here, the dominating function was residential with a small number of public services. Reconstruction was not conducted on a considerable part of the real estate, and the newly raised buildings retained their "historical character". More than a half of the edifices "recreated" during the 1950s and at the beginning of the 1960s did not constitute a reconstruction in the strict meaning of the term. The width of the lot, the elevation, the shape of the roof were disciplined and accompanied by "historical" stylistics and detail as well as traditional window and door carpentry, which recaptured the historical nature of the given district, and, as a rule, guaranteed an excellent setting for authentic reconstruction and architectonic details.

After the war, a special effort was made to reconstruct the most important national symbols i.e. statues (F.Chopin, T.Kosciuszko, A.Mickiewicz) as well as to commemorate wartime tragedy in prisons and concentration and death camps (e.g. Auschwitz-Birkenau). The term "martyrological" now revealed a feature which up to then was not present in the protection of monuments. The 5 877 sites of martyrdom and death during the Nazi occupation are the reason why only a small percentage is protected by conservators. The largest objects house museums.

Many valuable discoveries were made during conservation work (such as the Romanesque rotundas, columns and portals in Strzelno and Wroclaw). Large-scale reconstruction was performed in parks (Nieborow, Arkadia and Wolborz). The Cracow conservators in particular tried to retain authenticity as the basic value of the monument,

working on areas not affected by wartime devastation (H.Pienkowska). From 1945 extensive archeological and historical investigations examined the beginning of the Polish state in connection with the millennium of its Christianization (1966).

The greatest losses in the postwar period threatened rural buildings and in particular wooden ones, which were subjected to rapid destruction, exchange and modernization. At the moment, there are about 40 parks-ecomuseums of the Skansen variety, to which all the more important objects have been transferred.

During the 1960s the destroyed and unreconstructed central parts of old Towns were filled with new buildings. In Lower Silesia, Western Pomerania, Varmia and Mazuria there appeared new residential districts in place of historical urban complexes; the additions were composed of geometric, ahistorical solids. The concept of improving the old town complexes was to be expressed by undertakings connected with the sanitary, fire-prcvention, communication etc. conditions.

The most numerous group of historical monuments raised from wartime ruins were composed of churches (e.g. the cathedrals in Warsaw, Wroclaw, and Poznań and the church of the Virgin Mar in Gdalisk). Their interiors were empty and, as a rule, deprived o original details. The extant medieval altars were transferred to muse urns. Technological monuments, nineteenth-century and twentieth century fortifications (Cracow, Toruń and Przemsl) and large spatial arrangements (parks, cemeteries) as well as entire regions with particularly numerous relics from the past, and comprising cultural landscapes, were now penetrated.

The role of the official conservators was often diminished by the architectonic and construction, town-planning lobby. Instruction which normalized cooperation were of little help. Despite the fact that conservation work was conducted annually on about 400-50 objects, and within a centralized system, the relative state of the monuments in the country did not improve. An additional misunderstanding was introduced by the classification of monuments into several groups of value, fortunately applied very briefly, which was no correlated with the economic mechanisms of protection. The law passed on 15 February 1962 pertaining to the protection of cultural goods and museums formally sealed the existing connection between conservation and museum services. Alongside the concept of a "monument" there appeared the broader one of "cultural goods".

The specific feature of practical protection was, and is, the activity of the specialized enterprise known as the Workshops for the Conservation of Monuments. The sale of architectural monument which were part of the state property, was inaugurated in 1973. The reconstruction of the Royal Castle in Warsaw, conducted in the 1970 and 1980s from nationwide voluntary contributions, constitutes the greatest achievement of the Polish Art of conservation. A symptom of special interest in the revalorization of old town complexes were government decisions concerning the historical districts of Cracow Sandomierz and Zamosc. The monuments in Toruń were restore during the campaign preceding the 500th anniversary of the birth o Nicholas Copernicus.

In 1975 a new administrative division fragmentarised Poland into 49 voivodships (17 since a another reorganization in 2000), and increased the conservation services staff. During this period, State Agricultural Farms showed greater concern for the historical palace-park complexes and landed estate buildings which they administered. The largest task of the government was the revalorization of the historical complex of Cracow and the recognition of the need to protect buildings dating from the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. The battle for saving Kazimjerz Dolny from the investments of great industrial enterprises was won. In 1978 the post of the General Conservator of Monuments was raised to the rank of Secretary of State in the Ministry of Culture and Art. The great social upheavals of the 1980s vividly disclosed all the mechanisms which affected the protection of monuments, for example its connection with pollution and the destruction of the natural environment (Cracow, Katowice). In 1982 the Seym approved a Fund for the Development of Culture, which essentially guaranteed the protection of monuments at a time a general crisis; in 1983 it covered an unprecedented 100 percent of needs. The criteria of

historical value have been expanded by recognizing the existence of historical regions and the protection of cultural environments. The delineation of time limits which restricted the acknowledgment of a given object as an historical monument became no longer valid.

Polish protection of monuments in Poland is regulated by edict of Polish President dated on 6<sup>th</sup> of March 1928 about a care of monuments which was current up to 15<sup>th</sup> of February of 1962 when parliament Poland signed resolution about protection of cultural heritage and museums. After several amendments this resolution is respected by a present day. Since 1994 it is obliged to incorporate a decree about spending a public funds in form of calling an adjudication by tender. The aim of this procedure is to obtain a best offer, best in terms of the merit and the price. There are a number of documents needed to participate. The authorities justify an ability of the executor in terms of professional level of an offer which has to include a condition, technique, conservation program with propositions of treatment and materials as well as good financial condition for the guaranty of successfully conduct work. Another source of finances are parishes owning monuments. Poland as in a big percentage catholic country owns great number of movable monuments for the every day usage. In this case he obligatory of calling an adjudication is not needed and the parish-priest is allowed to choose an executor. In both cases an authorities form Monument Protection Services control all stages of work. This special service belong to the governments structure and is formed by a Minister of Culture.

## **1. High education of restorers in Poland.**

The Polish idea of conservation has its genealogy since half of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The activity of three centers educating conservators on academy level was an event in Europe for a long time. This first common presentation of the part of achievement is the form of a visiting card of Art education, summing elements of tradition and the present day, on which base developed education of conservators. The university artistic education in Poland in sphere of conservation exists since more than 50 years in three universities Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow and Warsaw and Nicholas Copernicus University in Toruń. The aim of educational process in master degree studies is preparing of artists - conservators and restorers of works of Art and monuments to their work. Programs of education are based on conviction that -it is difficult to put across the deeper analysis of the other author's work without knowing of creative process is creator's consciousness, that's why; general artistic abilities are necessary -technical and technological "knowledge is necessary to create, as well as familiarity with materials, new technologies, new materials required researches defined the range of their applying and durability -the wide interdisciplinary knowledge is necessary to define questions and realization of conservatory researches, defining through the masterpiece prism its individual characters, searching for factors of destruction, defining of methods and ways of counteract and prevent, defining of the best conditions of exposition, storing and transport -realization of the line of works is necessary for getting creator's experience based on a conscious, safe and ethical treatment of works of Art and monuments. The development of studies of conservation defined the period of six years of education necessary for realization of the program in earlier described range to conservator - artist educated that way would fully deserve his name.

Historical reflection is necessary to understand better conservatory development including conservatory education in Poland. The development of conservatory concept took place in Europe in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century in Polish conservatory concept is unique due to the build on experience conscious of difficult political conditions -dependence on three conquerors Russia, Prussia and Austria. Three different cultures of three conquerors had their influence on conservatory concept development When Poland become independent again was possible to integrate ideas and ways of work That was done by several programs and executive orders. They reached the universality actual until today It may be said that the achievements of Polish conservation of the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century are the derivative of this period summarizing experiences of four cultures.

Second important historical event was the cataclysm of the Second World War in which in Poland participate battling from the first to last day of war.

The necessity of rebuild and restoration of the monuments of culture after war appointed a next stage of creating and development of monuments security services, conservatory education and specialized companies together with continuation of 1918-1939 period experiences this create already more then 50-years old period of creating science and education of conservators on universities.

Apogee of Polish conservatory development is dated on years 1970s and 1980s, when the achievements of Monuments Conservation Company were backed by with the staff with conservatory university degree This time a term "Polish conservatory school" was born world wide.

The Art Conservation Department in the area of exact, nature and of Academy for Fine Arts in Cracow humanistic sciences important rule has been founded in 1950 and its has is played by summer practical courses been constantly developing the idea domestic and international (last 12 of artworks conservation years in Italy), laboratory lessons and as a connection of research activity painting pleinairs and creativeness. The Faculty's aim Faculty members -8 professors, is conservators education on the 3 adjuncts, 14 senior lecturers, 9 university degree and constant lecturers, 5 assistants, in addition research of conservation, its doctrine, to their teaching, maintain most possibilities and limits, relation to the important conservatory works heritage of the past and another areas in country scale, their own researches of scientific and artistic activity and master their abilities during Courses in two specialties -painting international stages (recently in conservation and sculpture Tempus program) conservation take 6 years and end up The Faculty is an editor of own with the defending of master degree magazine -Study and Materials of project. Apart of studying specialist Conservation and Restoration of Works topics students develop their artistic of Art Faculty AFA in Krakow (so far 8 abilities and get necessary knowledge issues).

The beginning of conservators education, on the Faculty of Fine Arts on Copernicus University in Torun is dated 1947, when professor Jerzy Remer irritated Department of Monument Science and Conservation. Departments activity was the continuation of didactic and research traditions of Stefan Batory University in Wilnius before the Second World War. The innovative concept which assumed the necessity of connection artistic and humanistic achievements with exact sciences was a base of conservators education In 1969 the Institute of Monument Science and Conservation was founded. Six years course of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Art prepare to independent activity on the area of artistic and conservation works defined as conservation and restoration of monuments They prepare to programming and, in some respect, to independent research of the structure, technique and technology of artworks as conservation and restoration is concerned Step by step, successively, students achieve abilities to define state of preservation of monuments, to put scientifically documented diagnosis and get abilities to qualify conservation methods and to prepare documentation of their work The method of teaching realized reflect interdisciplinary complexity of conservation activity The end of educational process is master's degree.

The faculty members from all departments carry on scientific, research and conservation activity. The aim of it is to create new ways and methods for conservation and restoration of artworks necessities There were hundreds of monuments from different age which passed throughout Institute's conservation laboratories. Many of museums, libraries, churches and archives co-operate with our Institute constantly. Members of faculties co-operate with many international organizations and institutions and they are active participants of international conferences.

In 1998 tree education centers are cooperating within one organization called Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Arts with its site in Warsaw.

The are also independent laboratories and Technical Institutes carrying out research for restoration as a cooperation project such as Mechanics Institute in Warsaw, High Army Academy in Warsaw.

## **2. Main research areas of interest in my Institute.**

- Climate control in the Museums and churches.
- Conservation prophylactics.
- Structure of Art object during treatment – optical, physical and chemical analysis.
- Conservation of modern, texture paintings.
- Retouching –searching best materials, critical analysis of already used – wall and easel paintings.
- Conservation of gilt, wooden object.
- Protective gold lack coatings on silver, historical leave.
- Research on wall old and new painting techniques – graffito, bulky appliques, transfers.
- Icons – conservation and technology.
- Paintings on a metal supports – conservation and restoration. Safe techniques and materials.

## **3. Conservation market – new materials.**

In a discussion of new materials is important to put it in a perspective of the conservation market. New products are very directly connected with the restoration market and there have been a lot of correlation between them:

- Restorers looking for well paid jobs,
- Investors looking for well paid commissions,
- Companies looking for selling to both groups,
- Researches helping restores in diagnoses and working on a new products serving two mentioned groups.

One would not exist well without another. The ideal situation is when a working team is interdisciplinary, involving all specialists possible. That is a case in big government sponsored or a special grant projects of a great importance. The more money on the market the better and newer materials have been used. Otherwise new and good materials are the first to cut of low budget projects. This is not danger if their is a good substitute within traditional or already used materials.

Many materials has changed in time which has been monitoring in situ or/and proved by laboratory research. The other are laboratory tested in the artificial climate/light chambers for their resistance to humidity changes and sensibility to the light.

There are a group materials considered safe which are mainly natural ones. And here I would like to stress the long term discussion between conservators who prefer old materials with the one who like new materials. Although in this discipline like in many others it is difficult to not take part in a global development. All areas of our live change most of them develop and chance completely, same other stay the same. (e.g. spit cleaning of Art object on one hand and complex Volber's cleaning systems on the other hand).

Some materials are adopted from the industry either chemical (Beva adhesive, areo-plain industry), paint (polymer paints, paint strippers), textile (goretex), or food (silica gel). We are lucky if we manage to test laboratory materials form the market, adopted earlier and reworked by companies supplying restores before they actually use it. On the other hand materials assessable today are in many case simple and effective in use so there is a danger of eliminating true highly educated professionals form the market since everything became

as simple as Windows operating system. Well labeled products a brief course on conservation in supermarket type of brochures produce a great number of ignorants dealing with Art object. Very specialized materials for conservator specially labeled with detail data shit is not always economically interesting for big companies since restoration market in not so wild. In the discussion on new materials few questions should be answer. Firstly – what material to use? in which hands and the secondly –apply in which way even by conservators. The best working materials in not very well educated conservator could also do a lot of harm. In order to improve knowledge on new materials the should be better easy accessible data on it most preferably on the Internet site. Exchanging detailed data on products by suppliers and working abilities by restorers as well as laboratory test would be a great help in the field.

#### **4. Materials used:**

- [1] B. Rymaszewski, Klucze Ochrony Zabytków w Polsce, Warszawa, 1992 r.
- [2] Zarys Problematyki Ochrony Zabytków, Skrypt dla uczestników kursów Towarzystwa Opieki nad Zabytkami, Warszawa, 1996 r.
- [3] A. Koss, I.Płuska, Polish Centers of Education of Art Conservators, Inter-Academy Institute of Conservation and Restoration of Works of Arts, Warsaw, 1998, 1999, 2000.