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## Between “Silesiae metropolim” and “Quasi centrum Europae”: The mobility of Breslau and Nuremberg artists in the 15th and 16th centuries

“Breslau, a city in the Silesian lands, noble and famous among the German and the Sarmatian nations...” – with these words Hartmann Schedel began the description of the city of Breslau (Wrocław) in his famous *Nuremberg Chronicle* printed in 1493.<sup>1</sup> Would the high repute of this city be so apparent to the Nuremberg author if it were not for the dense network of international connections and effective policy of the Breslau bishop Johannes Roth, also mentioned in the chronicle? This indeed seems likely, as Breslau was undoubtedly known to many of Nuremberg’s inhabitants, especially merchants, craftsmen and intellectuals who travelled there in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The history of commercial relationships between these two cities dates back to the 1200s.<sup>2</sup> However, the first merchant from Nuremberg recorded in Breslau arrived there in 1394.<sup>3</sup> By the first decade of the sixteenth century, at least eighty-three businesspersons originating from the capital of Franconia had arrived in Breslau for a longer period.<sup>4</sup> Many of them penetrated the local elite and even held seats on the city council.<sup>5</sup> As regards Nuremberg, people from Breslau never frequented the capital of Franconia in large numbers. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that the father of famous Nuremberg humanist Christoph II Scheurl – a merchant, Christoph I Scheurl (1457-1519) – was born in Breslau and moved to Nuremberg in around 1480.<sup>6</sup> Any of the abovementioned issues has been raised without reason, since they have provided several art historians with an important line of argument when explaining the causes for artists active in Silesia in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries to adopt numerous artistic inspirations originating from Nuremberg, as well as providing factors allegedly facilitating the migration of artists between these two cities.<sup>7</sup> Two branches of Breslau artistic production were most susceptible to the absorption and adaptation of Nuremberg novelties, namely painting (until ca. 1520)<sup>8</sup> and goldsmithing (until the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> cen-

tury),<sup>9</sup> and for that reason this article is devoted to them in particular.

Although several scholars have explored the issue of Nuremberg-Breslau commercial and artistic relationships, the multidimensional phenomenon of artists’ mobility between the banks of the Pegnitz and the Oder in the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 16<sup>th</sup> century has received little attention. The factors stimulating and inhibiting this process as well as the various types of migration merit consideration. The problem at hand also involves taking into account the vast number of networks – especially commercial, family, ecclesiastical, and monastery ties – that determined and facilitated the migration in question. This aspect appears vital, for almost every case of artists’ mobility discussed below was anything but coincidental and took place within the framework of dense networks. Despite the fact that the analysis will encompass both Nuremberg and Breslau, special attention will be devoted to the latter, especially in the context of potential interdependence – or a lack thereof – between artists’ migration, their social position, intense trade contacts and far-reaching family ties connecting Nuremberg and Breslau.

### **Craft production in Nuremberg and Breslau: Particular focus on goldsmiths, painters and sculptors**

For a long time, the Imperial City of Nuremberg enjoyed a Europe-wide reputation as a leading centre for craft production. This success would never have been possible without the well-thought-out policy adopted by the Nuremberg Lesser Council, which in 1349, after the craftsmen’s revolt and the resulting proscription of the guilds, acquired sole control of the local craft and trade.<sup>10</sup> Depending on the degree of linkage with city economics, the Nuremberg crafts were divided into two categories: “sworn crafts” (*geschworene Handwerke*) and “free arts” (*freie Künste*). The excellent performance results of the city council’s strategy, combined with creating favourable

conditions for settlement and work for many foreigners, had a direct bearing on the number of talented artisans reaching Nuremberg "from near and far".<sup>11</sup> As a result, several famous Nuremberg artists were immigrants – Hans Pleydenwurff, Albrecht Dürer the Elder, Veit Stoss, Wenzel Jamnitzer, to name a few.

The group of "sworn crafts" encompassed all strategic professions supplying local merchants mostly with export commodities.<sup>12</sup> From 1381, goldsmithing belonged to this particular group.<sup>13</sup> The Nuremberg goldsmiths were subject to the strict control of the Lesser Council, which imposed on them a set of regulations (Ordnungen) and designated two sworn supervisors from among the local goldsmith masters who exercised control over their colleagues and the quality of their works. Especially the period between the 15<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century saw an impressive development of this craft in Nuremberg, reflected in the rapidly rising number of goldsmiths active there. The only rival to cast doubt on the position of Nuremberg's goldsmiths was Augsburg, which did not noticeably surpass Nuremberg until the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

The second group of Nuremberg crafts, which generated fewer profits for the city economy and patricians' commercial companies, the so-called "free arts", benefited from more freedom with regard to the surveillance imposed by the Lesser Council.<sup>15</sup> The representatives of "free arts", including painters and sculptors, were subject to the general bylaws applicable to all crafts. What is more, many newcomers could remain invisible to the local authorities, and in the city records, on the condition that they did not intend to run their own workshop, which was the privilege of the masters.<sup>16</sup> The painters were given free rein to hire journeymen or accept apprentices; and until 1596, when Nuremberg's painters finally received their first *Ordnung*, no list of active journeymen or apprentices was ever created.<sup>17</sup>

The organisation of craft production in Breslau was much more traditional and similar to most European towns of that time, including when it came to accepting journeymen as well as new masters from other parts of the region.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, two issues should be mentioned briefly. First of all, after the merchants the goldsmiths, at least from the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, belonged to the second most import-

ant guild in Breslau, whose members enjoyed more respect and had higher social status than, for example, painters.<sup>19</sup> Secondly, from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards Breslau City Council had sent to Nuremberg numerous inquiries concerning the organisation of goldsmiths craft production and its technical aspects.<sup>20</sup> It is without doubt that Nuremberg served here as a point of reference in every unresolved problem.

### Journeyman years (Wanderjahre)

Journeyman years may appear to be one of the most popular and customary reasons behind artists' mobility, often resulting in the dissemination of new artistic inspirations as well as generating new or maintaining existing networks. Nonetheless, as regards artists' mobility between Nuremberg and Breslau in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, several notions concerning journeyman years are anything but a matter of course, and their analysis leads to numerous difficulties. First, the amount of archival sources detailing journeyman years in the territory and time in question is too little to permit any comprehensive reconstruction of this phenomenon.<sup>21</sup> The second problem relates to the guild and craft regulations, and customary rules concerning journeyman years which are unknown to us – in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, neither painters nor the goldsmiths were obliged to travel to foreign artistic centres, although of course this does not imply that they did not travel.<sup>22</sup> In Nuremberg and Breslau, the first official regulations concerning the journeyman years were formulated in the 16<sup>th</sup> century: more specifically, in 1515 for Nuremberg's goldsmiths and in 1596 for its painters<sup>23</sup> and in 1580 for goldsmiths in Breslau<sup>24</sup> and in 1593 for the city's painters.<sup>25</sup> The last main predicament involves dealing with several assumptions made without source-based analysis as well as deconstructing the romantic view of the commonness of journeyman years.

The vision of the ambitious Breslau apprentice gaining new experiences in numerous foreign artistic centres – beginning in Prague and travelling, via Nuremberg and Cologne, as far as the Netherlands – and then returning to his hometown, was linked to certain scholars analysing 15<sup>th</sup>-century panel painting in Silesia. Consequently, it used to be commonly ac-

cepted that at least some painters active in Breslau, including Nicolaus Obilman<sup>26</sup> and artists from the circle of Wilhelm Kalteysen von Oche,<sup>27</sup> spent their journeyman years in Nuremberg. The main criterion supporting such an assumption was usually the presence in their *oeuvre* of particular models and artistic solutions based on the Netherlandish *ars nova*. According to many scholars, Nuremberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> century played an intermediary role in conveying new artistic trends between the Netherlands and Central Europe, including Silesia.<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately, owing to the circumstances already mentioned, the presence of any painter’s apprentice or journeyman from Breslau in Nuremberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, if they were ever there, was probably never recorded, and is now virtually impossible to prove. Moreover, even much more detailed source material referring to painter’s apprentices in Breslau also yields no information if we try to trace any painter from Nuremberg recorded explicitly as a journeyman.

The notion of “invisible” apprentices and journeymen is not limited only to Nuremberg, but instead something of a general problem across Europe. Recently, Robert Suckale reflected on the assumption that, before the early modern period, German painter’s journeymen frequently travelled to the Netherlands in the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>29</sup> The German art historian detailed two issues which seem rather general in nature, and as such could also be related to the problem of Breslau-Nuremberg journeyman years in the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Above all it was a rather expensive undertaking, meaning it was beyond the financial means of a large group of European apprentices. Even if some of them managed to collect money for the journey, they ran the risk of facing municipal policies aimed at protecting the local crafts, which were common in Europe. Many towns, including Ulm and Cologne, at least in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, did not accept any foreign journeymen (meaning those without citizenship) in their local workshops, even those who were eager to work without remuneration.<sup>30</sup> Another scholar, Polish art historian Antoni Ziemba, also took the idea of the widespread mobility of medieval journeymen painters with a pinch of salt. According to Ziemba, in the 15<sup>th</sup> and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, the migration of Central European artists

was determined by their need to settle and stabilize rather than to find new inspirations and learn new skills.<sup>31</sup> These last two incentives, typical for the education model of early modern artists, were of course not alien to the 15<sup>th</sup>-century artisans – which is illustrated by the case of Albrecht Dürer the Elder and his famous son, among many other examples.<sup>32</sup> Albrecht Dürer however belonged to a smaller than previously thought group of travelling journeymen, whose mobility was not only determined by their own will but also facilitated by their family background as well as affluent and influential supporters.

The latter aspect, namely prominent patrons and supporters, appeared to play a significant role in the course and destination of travels undertaken by Breslau journeymen goldsmiths. This is clearly illustrated by the career paths of Erasmus Schlepner and Fabian Nitsch, two of four Breslau goldsmiths who honed their skills in Nuremberg during the period under examination.<sup>33</sup> Undoubtedly, Erasmus Schlepner owed his stay in Nuremberg in 1517 to his patron, Breslau bishop Johannes Thurzon, as well as to his extensive network of family ties.<sup>34</sup> Erasmus’ father, Nicolaus Schlepner, was a goldsmith who enjoyed special favour of the Breslau bishop Johannes Roth, completing numerous prestigious commissions for him.<sup>35</sup> In all probability, it was Nicolaus’ strong position on the Breslau Bishopric Court that helped his elder son and at the same time Erasmus’ brother – Dominik Schlepner – to become a man of the cloth who followed a career path typical of the Reformation era. In 1512, Dominik became a notary of Johannes Thurzon, before subsequently studying in Leipzig and Wittenberg, where he met Martin Luther.<sup>36</sup> Owing to this acquaintance, in 1522 he was appointed preacher at St. Sebald’s church in Nuremberg, where he decided to settle down and start a family.<sup>37</sup> Erasmus Schlepner, in turn, walked in his father’s footsteps. Taking advantage of his father’s and brother’s position, he earned the backing and patronage of the Breslau bishop Johannes Turzon – the descendant of a powerful and rich merchant family, a man with a broad network of intellectual, ecclesiastic and trade bonds, as well as a client of Albrecht Dürer and Nuremberg goldsmiths.<sup>38</sup> Apart from polishing his skills and adopting new artistic tendencies, Erasmus Schlepner’s stay in

Nuremberg entailed representing the interests and finalising artistic orders of his patron.<sup>39</sup> After Erasmus returned to Breslau, he continued working for Thurzon and the cathedral clergy. In 1524 he became a citizen of Breslau, which meant entering the city’s goldsmith guild and conforming to the needs of the new category of clients.<sup>40</sup> His son, Sebastian, became a member of the Breslau cathedral chapter, whereas one of Dominik Schleupner’s two sons – David – worked as a goldsmith in Nuremberg from 1559.<sup>41</sup>

In 1596, nearly eight decades after Erasmus Schleupner, but in similar circumstances, another Breslau goldsmith, Fabian Nitsch, arrived in Nuremberg as a journeyman.<sup>42</sup> He was the son of Paul Nitsch – the most-favoured goldsmith in the service of Breslau bishop Andreas Jerin, not only the executor of numerous artworks ordered by the pontiff but also his personal artistic advisor.<sup>43</sup> The close relationship between the bishop and Paul Nitsch, as well as the latter’s undeniable talent, were what saw Fabian Nitsch travel to Nuremberg equipped with a letter of recommendation, which in turn helped him find a workshop to develop his skills.<sup>44</sup> After gaining new experiences in Nuremberg, he continued his journey to Italy.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, Nuremberg law governing goldsmiths did not meticulously regulate the procedures of accepting foreign journeymen by local masters. Before 1572, the masters were allowed to have as many apprentices as they needed, and after 1572 their number was limited to five.<sup>45</sup> Therefore letters of recommendation were in theory not obligatory for newcomers. In practice, however, such support would be highly desirable for goldsmiths in a very competitive environment where standards were high, as was the case in Nuremberg at that time. Moreover, the case of Erasmus Schleupner and Fabian Nitsch appears to be anything but an exception. Even Martin Luther himself became *en passant* a eulogist of the Nuremberg goldsmiths when, in a letter written in 1525, he extolled their skills and the quality of their works in order to win their favour for the young apprentice Andreas Heidenreich from Wittenberg, who intended to spend his journeyman years in Nuremberg.<sup>46</sup> We may presume that Breslau’s goldsmiths and their patrons followed a more popular tendency.



Fig. 1 Unknown Silesian artists; Epitaph of Veit Stoss the Younger; ca. 1569; sandstone; St. Anne’s Church in Frankenstein (Ząbkowice Śląskie)

Incidentally, it is worth mentioning that, unlike Breslau’s painters, the goldsmiths’ workshops in the Silesian capital became a destination for journeymen goldsmiths from Nuremberg, albeit mostly in the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, save for two exceptions. In the Breslau *libri excessum* in the year 1551, there is mention of the following name: “Veyt Stoss den Goldtschmidgesellen”.<sup>47</sup> He was the son of the Nuremberg sculptor and goldsmith Willibald Stoss, the son of the great Veit Stoss.<sup>48</sup> Veit Stoss the Younger appears a rather mysterious person – it is not clear who he worked for in Breslau or why he moved to Frankenstein (Ząbkowice Śląskie), where he died in 1569 according to his epitaph, which survives to this day (Fig. 1). Moreover, Breslau was found in the itinerary of Wolf Röttenbeck, who left Nuremberg in 1596; after spending three years in Augsburg, he travelled inter alia to Munich, Prague, Breslau, Thorn, Danzig, Königsberg, Riga, Lübeck, Hamburg, Magdeburg and then back to his hometown, where he became a master in 1602.<sup>49</sup> Less fortunate was Gottfried Kretzer, the

Nuremberg journeyman goldsmith, who died in Breslau in 1606.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, the journeyman years spent in Nuremberg turned out to be profitable to Fabian Nitsch and beneficial for the expansion of his professional network – in 1618 he accepted four journeymen from Nuremberg and Augsburg in his Breslau workshop.<sup>51</sup> Finally, another two Breslau goldsmiths – Hans Volgnandt (d. 1634) and Tobias Vogt (d. 1654) – had also trained anonymous journeymen from these two most important centres of goldsmithing in Europe.<sup>52</sup> It cannot therefore be ruled out that, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the position of Breslau goldsmiths improved and they had a high standing in the international arena.

The question of journeyman years analysed primarily from the perspective of Breslau painters and goldsmiths travelling to Nuremberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, permits a number of observations. First, the differences in status between highly regarded goldsmithing and less prestigious painting, observed in both cities, could have had a bearing on the mobility of journeymen and the traceability of said mobility. The high position of goldsmiths in Breslau provided them not only with a higher income but also more influential clients. Consequently, and in comparison to painters, they were more likely to travel, including during their journeyman years, supported as they were by their powerful patrons – this was a luxury which Breslau painters in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries experienced on a smaller scale. Secondly, the development of Erasmus Schlepner and Fabian Nitsch demonstrates that their education in Nuremberg, supported by Breslau bishops, would have not been possible had it not been for the successful careers and networking of their fathers. Notably, family ties and the passing down of the goldsmith profession through the generations was the key to a better education and more thought-out career path.

### Migration for settlement

The most self-evident factor behind artists settling in particular artistic centres in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries seems to have been their motivation to acquire citizenship in these centres. When searching for Breslau artists active in Nuremberg for a longer period of time, this criterion definitely prevails, although it turned out

to be not the only factor. In 1455, the sculptor Nicolaus “von Breslau” was the first Silesian artist recorded in Nuremberg to become a citizen of the city.<sup>53</sup> Further mentions, from 1484 and 1497, clearly indicate that he was a respected artisan who probably spent most of his life in Nuremberg. Another Breslauer, namely the goldsmith Georg Bock, passed his master exam in Nuremberg in 1555, where he also married, obtained citizenship and bought a house.<sup>54</sup> In Nuremberg he executed at least one artwork – the silver goblet with his initials which was given to the city in 1573. Last but not least, in 1560 Andreas Riehl, the “*contrafetter*” (portrait painter), was made to decide whether he wanted to stay in Breslau or not.<sup>55</sup> He decided to travel to Nuremberg, where he became a citizen in 1575 and even had one apprentice.<sup>56</sup> In 1598 he found a better job opportunity, so he left Nuremberg to work in Berlin. Against this backdrop, the case of Breslau “*Orgelbauer*” Stephan Kaschendorf (Kaschendorffer) appears highly exceptional. After finishing his education in Breslau and spending a few years working there, he earned special recognition in Nuremberg as the builder of the organs for St. Giles’ church (1459/60), the Augustinians’ church (1460) and the Church of Our Lady (1464/65).<sup>57</sup> Given the fact that this represented commissions for at least 24 years – between 1459 and 1483 – he must have settled here for a longer period of time, even though he was never recorded as a citizen of Nuremberg. By the end of his life, he owned two houses: one in Dresden and one in Schweidnitz (Świdnica), so he was probably a rather mobile person. In 1464 another Breslau “*Orgelmeister*”, namely “*meister Ludwig, orgelmeister von Preßlau*” who was active in Nördlingen, was offered Nuremberg citizenship.<sup>58</sup> It is highly likely that he refused, although we do know that he worked at the Pegnitz on finishing the organs for Nördlingen. It is also presumed that “*meister Ludwig*” was Ludwig von Kalbe, who in 1469 was granted permission to work in Nuremberg for a half year.<sup>59</sup> This would suggest that particular professions were in great demand in Nuremberg and that members of certain professions could work in Nuremberg, even for long periods, without becoming citizens.

According to the Breslau and Nuremberg city records, Nuremberg’s craftsmen, despite being more

mobile than the Breslau artisans, did not rush to the Silesian capital in large groups either. The first Nuremberg painter in Breslau was not recorded until 1427, and according to the archival source he was highly talented.<sup>60</sup> Such a recommendation did not encourage local commissioners and the city council to attract more Nuremberg artists to the capital of Silesia. Over the course of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, only one goldsmith decided to settle there for a long time. It was Peter Krafft, who earned his master title in Nuremberg in 1439 and lived in Breslau between 1451 and 1475.<sup>61</sup> Afterwards he returned to his hometown in order to work in a workshop of Albrecht Dürer the Elder. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the tendency mentioned changed to a very limited extent. Two more goldsmiths who trained in Nuremberg decided to settle down in Breslau: Hans Kraftshofer the Younger (between 1508 and 1533) and Veit Wasinger, who married in Breslau in 1598.<sup>62</sup> Equally little is known – most notably the date of death – about the illuminist Hans Zwirschwager, who died before 1593,<sup>63</sup> and the painter Jacob Kolb, who passed away in 1568.<sup>64</sup>

The overview presented clearly demonstrates that, according to surviving records, neither the Breslau artists in Nuremberg nor Nuremberg craftsmen in Breslau stimulated an adoption among Silesian artists of tendencies and solutions originating from the capital of Franconia. After their settlement in Nuremberg, most of the Breslau artists did not return to their hometown, so they had no opportunity to pass on their experiences. The number of Nuremberg artists who settled down in Breslau was rather too small to dominate or at least influence the local artists.

### Short stays of Nuremberg artists in Breslau

The array of very brief mentions concerning the temporary presence of Nuremberg artists in Breslau results in the wide variety of factors which determined their mobility – factors that were usually, but not exclusively, related to their artistic activity. Temporary presence should be understood as any short stay, including the journeyman years already mentioned, which did not culminate in an artist becoming a citizen of Breslau. In most cases, the archival sources reveal only individual facts about the artists' presence, without providing any further circumstances sur-



Fig. 2 Hans Pleydenwurff; Deposition from the Cross; 1462; tempera and oil on panel; 286,3 x 142,2; Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg

rounding such stays, thus leaving the door open to speculation. In some instances it would, therefore, be impossible to find the relationship – even a putative one – between artists' stays in Breslau and the adoption of Nuremberg artistic solutions by local artists. Nevertheless, this is still a question worth asking.

The first important and at the same time very rare type of short-term migration of Nuremberg artists to Breslau is related to their personal delivery of commissioned artworks. The most famous Nuremberg artist who undoubtedly visited Breslau under such circumstances was the painter Hans Pleydenwurff. On 30 June 1462, before Breslau City Council he person-

ally declared that he had received payment for executing and mounting an altarpiece at St. Elizabeth's church (Fig. 2), as well as that all other costs he bore had been covered.<sup>65</sup> Although we are not aware of any other facts concerning his stay in Breslau, there are at least a few matters worth consideration. The first applies to the identity of the person or persons who put forward a proposal to order a retable for the most important parish church in Breslau directly in Nuremberg. Similarly to the St. Mary's altar in Cracow executed by the workshop of Veit Stoss, the facts and names related to the negotiations with the artist as well as details concerning the order are unknown. Nonetheless, since the 14<sup>th</sup> century St. Elizabeth's church had been under the supervision of Breslau City Council, which granted the church financial and organisational support for several undertakings, including Pleydenwurff's altarpiece. This last fact is confirmed by a letter written by Nuremberg councillors to their counterparts in Breslau on 21 July 1462.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, at that time a substantial number of immigrants with links to Nuremberg, including representatives of the families Scheurl, Pfinzig, Hornung and Heugel, became members of the local authorities and had a material impact on all decisions. The assumption that it was their initiative to order an altarpiece in Nuremberg, however, must remain pure conjecture.<sup>67</sup> The second problem is related to the surprising coincidence between the Pope granting two Breslau parish churches, St. Elizabeth's and St. Mary Magdalene's, a privilege of plenary indulgence in 1461 – a source of high income to the city – and the emergence of Pleydenwurff's altarpiece only a year after.<sup>68</sup> It is quite possible that the execution of the retable was financed using the generous offerings made by pilgrims. Finally, the most important question concerns the duration and course of Pleydenwurff's stay in Breslau, as there are indications that he and the members of his workshop spent more time there than only a few days to collect the payment. Over a century ago, the German scholar Werner Weisbach linked Pleydenwurff's absence in the Nuremberg tax register from 1462 with his ostensible longer stay in Breslau.<sup>69</sup> Nowadays, the explanation of this fact appears rather simple – Pleydenwurff was probably granted a tax exemption in Nuremberg as a reward for executing an



Fig. 3 Hans Pleydenwurff; Presentation of Jesus at the temple; 1462; 91,5 × 75; National Museum in Warsaw

export product.<sup>70</sup> Nevertheless, Pleydenwurff could have stayed longer in Breslau, as it remains plausible that some finishing works executed on site had preceded the montage of the altarpiece.<sup>71</sup> The likelihood of such a course of events is increased based on the analysis of the chemical composition of the white lead used in the scene *Presentation of Jesus at the temple* (Fig. 3), which turned out to be identical to the one from the paintings executed a few years later in local Breslau workshops.<sup>72</sup>

Another argument, *per analogiam*, is provided by the well-documented example of Hans Multscher and his six-month stay in Sterzing in 1458, where he finished the altarpiece.<sup>73</sup> What is more, is it highly likely that some local Breslau artists contacted Pleydenwurff, or at least had an opportunity to take a very careful look at his paintings and drawings, and subsequently copied selected compositions and details. This claim is supported by the analysis of the paintings of the so-called Liegnitz altarpiece finished in 1466.

In the scene *Adoration of Christ* (Fig. 4), the Breslau artists not only applied a compositional pattern commonly used in Pleydenwurff's workshop,<sup>74</sup> but

also included micro-scale details such as a small goldfinch sitting on the brick wall and a water-mill on the river that could hardly be visible from a distance and were part of the Nuremberg artistic repertoire – and were otherwise absent in Silesia.

Given the lack of more elaborate archival sources, any reconstruction of Pleydenwurff's stay in Breslau will always remain hypothetical, and this remark also applies to the arguments presented above.



Fig. 4 Silesian Workshop (also attributed to Nicolaus Obilmann); Adoration of Christ; 1466; tempera on panel; Muzeum Narodowe Warsaw



Fig. 5 So-called Master of 1486-87; Adoration of Christ; 1486; 152 x 116; National Museum Wrocław

As the largest and most developed city in the whole region, the seat of the bishop and many religious orders, as well as the place where numerous important trade routes crossed, Breslau provided merchants and artists with an opportunity to exchange goods and information as well as acquire new clients, including from very remote towns. In 1487, works on the main altarpiece came to an end in St. Mary's Church of the Canons Regular of the Lateran in Breslau (Fig. 5).<sup>75</sup> The formal, iconographical, and technical analysis of the preserved painted part of this retable proved that it was executed by anonymous artists educated in Nuremberg. They arrived in Breslau under unknown circumstances, and in years that followed continued their activity in Silesian territory, establishing two different workshops.<sup>76</sup> The first workshop, of the so-called Master of 1486-87, comprised artists trained in the circle of Hans Pleydenwurff and his disciples.<sup>77</sup> This particular group of artists remained very mobile – they executed artworks for convent and parish churches in Breslau, Striegau (Pl. Strzegom), Schweidnitz, and apparently operated based on the networks and protection of the convents, instead of Silesian towns' guilds. The painters gathered in the second workshop, of the so-called Master of Giessmanssdorf's Altarpiece, whose works in turn demonstrate close links to the early *oeuvre* of Michael Wolgemut and his circle, moved to the north-western territory of Silesia after 1487.<sup>78</sup> In all probability, they too took advantage of the convent networks, operating in close connection with the monastery of the Canons Regular of Lateran in Sagan. In the case of both of these workshops, their members' stay in Breslau opened the door to future commissions. What is more, contrary to previously formulated general opinions, their presence and activity in Silesia was unrelated to the Nuremberg merchants operating in this territory.

Breslau served also as a 'stop' for Nuremberg artists on their way to and from other centres, and also a place where they could cut their own deals. For instance, we are familiar with two documented stays of Veit Stoss the Elder in Breslau.<sup>79</sup>

In 1526 he turned up in Breslau as an inhabitant of Nuremberg and a highly enterprising artist, in order to demand payment from Hans Starczedel (d. 1528).



Back in 1504, Breslau had become a shelter to the latter – a Nuremberg merchant whose bankruptcy provoked Veit Stoss to commit a forgery, which ultimately brought nothing but misery for him<sup>80</sup> Another Nuremberg artist who decided to stop in Breslau in 1584 was the goldsmith Caspar Betz, who was then en route to Prague, which he reached in 1588.<sup>81</sup> Finally, the most mysterious alleged traveller to Breslau seems to be Georg Pencz, since the Silesian city is reported – as is Leipzig – as the probable place of his death.<sup>82</sup>

At least two artists related to Nuremberg visited Breslau for non-artistic purposes, playing the role of messengers of Nuremberg City Council. By the end of 1529, the military architect Hans von Riedlingen reported to Nuremberg City Council about his activity in Breslau.<sup>83</sup> Although his message merits more comprehensive study, it must be stressed that in all probability he was the observer or even became involved in the demolition of the abbey of Elbing (Ołbin). It was one of the most controversial decisions of Breslau's Protestant city council, justified as a precautionary measure taken in the face of the threat of a Turkish attack. Another artist in the service of the Nuremberg City Council was the illuminator Georg Stern, who in 1590 travelled to the capital of Silesia as the "Breslauer Bote".<sup>84</sup> The details of his mission remain unknown.

## Conclusions

Analysis of the mobility of artists between Breslau and Nuremberg in the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries clearly demonstrates that the presence of numerous merchants of Nuremberg origins in Breslau had little, if any, impact on this particular mobility. Of course, the trade networks connecting the two cities may have facilitated the commissioning of an altarpiece from Pleydenwurff's workshop or the sending of Erasmus Schlepner to Nuremberg, but we are not sure to what extent. Moreover, it becomes clear that the social position of artists from particular crafts was closely related to their mobility – more affluent and appreciated by their patrons, goldsmiths migrated more frequently than painters. It must also be stressed that, given the scarcity of Nuremberg records covering the artists who did not become mas-

ters in Nuremberg, the greater mobility of the artists from this city, in comparison to those from Breslau, may be illusory. On the other hand, the capital of Franconia, as "Quasi Centrum Europae",<sup>85</sup> was a highly competitive environment and this fact probably contributed to the very high turnover of craftsmen, forcing their mobility as well as their search for clients, even in the more remote corners. Finally, the analysis of artists' mobility, especially with reference to their settlement, both in Nuremberg and Breslau, indicates that its role in the process of dissemination of Nuremberg artistic inspirations in Silesia was rather overestimated. While considering this issue, one must not disregard the important role of woodcuts and prints, delivered to Silesia by mostly Nuremberg printers and booksellers.<sup>86</sup>

Reviewed by Matthew Rockey

## Endnotes

1. "Breßlaw schlesier lands ein edle vnd bey dem teutschen und sarmatischen volck ein fast namhafftige statt..." English translation after: Karen Lambrecht, *Communicating Europe to the Region: Breslau in the Age of the Renaissance*, In: *German History* 20 (2002), No. 1, p. 10-11.
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3. *Ibid.*, p. 1075.
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  24. Hintze 1906, *Die Breslauer*, p. 6-8.
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  34. Tadeusz Chrzanowski, *Kilka uwag o złotnictwie śląskim* [Some remarks on the Silesian goldsmithing], in: *Złotnictwo śląskie. VII sesja z cyklu „Sztuka użytkowa na Śląsku” 7 X 1993 r.*, ed. Józef Pater, Wrocław 1995, p. 14; Aleksandra Szewczyk, *Mecenat artystyczny biskupa wrocławskiego Jana V Thurzona (1506-1520)* [Artistic patronage of the Breslau's bishop Jan V Thurzon (1506-1520)], Wrocław 2009, p. 78.
  35. Regulska 2011, *Gotyckie złotnictwo*, p. 24, 67-69.
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  37. Ibid.
  38. See: Szewczyk 2009, *Mecenat artystyczny*.
  39. Ibid., p. 37.
  40. Hintze 1906, *Die Breslauer*, p. 152.
  41. Theodor Hampe, *Nürnberger Ratsverlässe über Kunst und Künstler im Zeitalter der Spätgotik und Renaissance (1449) 1474 – 1618 (1633)*, Wien, Leipzig 1904, Rv. I 3790.
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  49. *Nürnberger Künstlerlexikon* 2007, p. 1256.
  50. Hintze 1906, *Die Breslauer*, p. 126, 173-174.

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73. Nicolo Rasmus, *Der Multscher-Altar in Sterzing*, Bozen 1963, p. 21-23.
74. The scene is a perfect mirror image of a drawing attributed by Robert Suckale to Pleydenwurffs workshop – see: Suckale 2009, *Die Erneuerung*, vol. 1, p. 238.
75. *Chronica abbatum Beatae Mariae Virginis in Arena*, in: *Scriptores Rerum Silesiacarum oder Sammlung schlesischer Geschichtsschreiber*, vol. II, ed. Gustav Adolf Stenzel, Breslau 1839, p. 260.
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## Picture credits

Fig. 1 St. Anne's Church in Żąbkowice Śląskie (Frankenstein); Foto Radosław Gliński

Fig. 2 Germanisches Nationalmuseum Nuremberg, Gm 1127, ©Germanisches Nationalmuseum; Foto Georg Janßen; source: <http://objektkatalog.gnm.de/objekt/Gm1127>

Fig. 3 and 4 National Museum Warsaw; Foto Agnieszka Patała

Fig. 5 National Museum Wrocław; Foto Arkadiusz Podstawka

## Summary

Although several scholars have explored the issue of commercial and artistic relationships between Nuremberg and Breslau, the multidimensional phenomenon of artists' mobility between the banks of the Pegnitz and the Oder in the 15th and the 16th centuries has received little attention. Taking into account the vast number of networks – especially commercial, family, ecclesiastical, and monastery ties – that determined and facilitated the migration in question, especially among painters and goldsmiths, it turns out that the presence of numerous merchants in Breslau who were originally from Nuremberg had little impact on this particular mobility. Nevertheless, almost every case of artists' mobility discussed was anything but coincidental, taking place within the framework of dense networks. Moreover, it becomes clear that the social position of artists from particular crafts was closely related to their mobility – more affluent and appreciated by their patrons, goldsmiths migrated more frequently than painters.

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**Title**

Agnieszka Patała, Between "Silesiae metropolim" and "Quasi centrum Europae": The mobility of Breslau and Nuremberg artists in the 15th and 16th centuries, in: *Mobility of Artists in Central and Eastern Europe between 1500 and 1900*, ed. by Aleksandra Lipińska in collaboration with Stéphanie Baumewerd, kunsttexte.de/ostblick, Nr. 3, 2016 (12 pages), [www.kunsttexte.de/ostblick](http://www.kunsttexte.de/ostblick).