

Aleksandra Lipińska

Editorial: Mobility of artists in Central and Eastern Europe between 1500 and 1900

Mobility of artists was undoubtedly one of the key factors shaping the art of Central and Eastern Europe. In this multi-ethnic region so troubled by political conflicts and instability of borders, resulting in fluidity of identity, artists often played the role of mediators in communication between different national cultures. Previous art history research, marred by nationalisms, addressed the issue of migration of artists for two separate reasons. In one model attempts were made, using the example of migration processes, to offer proof of the power of influence of certain centres over backward peripheries.¹ In the other, effort was invested in demonstrating the sovereignty of the nation's own culture by showing that it rejected "non-vernacular" elements, while in cases where such were accepted, their foreign origins were denied. In terms of numbers, the dominant type were studies which reduced migrant artists to the role of "media" or "vehicles" for influences flowing from the artistic centres of Western or Southern Europe.² Separate ideologized discourses developed in relation to German artists – but also to others – as a reaction to the German "culture bearer" theory (*Kulturträgertheorie*).

As such models of thinking marginalised the transnational or transregional mobility and complex identity of artists, they naturally stood in contradiction to the historical reality. Such research approaches have for several decades now been disavowed, and in the interim many accurate studies have been produced discussing selected aspects of this issue.³ Nonetheless, especially in respect of the under-researched region of Central and Eastern Europe, certain research deficits still exist. Moreover, new questions and desiderata have emerged.⁴ Particularly in light of the now widely discussed concept of transculturality, mobility of artists clearly reflects the dynamics and multiplicity of transnational and transregional contacts and their significance for art.⁵ In this context the meanderings of artists are interesting not only because they bring to light existing connections and lay bare the mechanisms by which new networks of contacts come into being. This is also a phenomenon which enables us to draw conclusions regarding the political, economic, social and religious factors that

contributed to migration. The mobility of artists is, moreover, one element of the wider question of knowledge transfer, and as such supplies material for interdisciplinary studies. Relative to this, the mobility of artists is an important indicator of the cultural significance and attractiveness of cities or courts, and of the aesthetic, motivic and ideological preferences of both artists and their clients. Moreover, it is a source of information on the effectiveness of the art market in a given period. Finally, it also helps us to establish the financial potential of patrons and the market strategies of artists.

Over the deliberately broadly selected period of time covered by the programme (from 1500 to 1900) mobility of artists took on a variety of forms characteristic for particular periods. In the case of educational travels there is a vast difference between the journeyman stage of the regulation guild training in the early modern period and the "modern pilgrimage" of young artists to ateliers and academies in Paris or Rome in the 18th or 19th century. Both training methods and the institutional frameworks within which they functioned changed over time. The force of attraction of particular artistic centres was also variable.

The fundamental questions remain the same, however: what prompted artists to travel? Did other players, such as patrons, influence their decisions to leave their native regions, and if so, in what way? What role did family, vocational or local networks play in the choice of destination or the decision to stay abroad or return home? What other factors contributed to the decision to undertake a brief or extended journey or to emigrate? Was the driving force behind their mobility the desire to develop as artists and make a career for themselves, or was it forced by negative factors, such as unemployment, persecution or a life-threatening situation? Are there any parallels in the life stories of mobile artists that are common to several periods or regions? Last but not least, a question that remains central to the interests of art historians concerns the way in which artists' voyages were reflected in the form and content of their works, and what impact they had on the environments in which they were active.

The studies published here address many of these issues. Agnieszka Patała in her article demonstrates the complexity of the factors crucial to the artistic contacts between Breslau (Wrocław) and Nuremberg in the 15th and 16th centuries. In the network which she delineates young artists occupied an important place, though they were not more important than the merchants who built relations between these two metropolises or the “travelling” works themselves. One of the issues tackled by Katrin Dyballa in her text on Georg Pencz is the distinction between the travelling work and the artist as media of cultural transfer. In her analysis of the career of this Nuremberg artist, Dyballa reconstructs his network and its influence on the mobility or non-mobility of Pencz and his works.

Masza Sitek in her article looks at the question of the instrumentalisation of the lives and works of migrant artists in an age when art history was strongly influenced by the nationalist discourse. The example she uses is the discussion surrounding the origins or presumed stay of another Nuremberg artist, Hans von Kulmbach, in Poland. This debate was played out in the 19th and 20th centuries by Polish and German scholars of local history and art historians.

The issue of the identity of the “nomad artist” is also central to the thoughts of Maria Nitka. Unlike the author of the preceding article, who focused on the identity “attributed” to the artist by scholarship for ideological reasons, Nitka analyses the complex identity of Tadeus Kuntze, born in Grünberg (Zielona Góra), educated in Cracow, and artistically successful in Rome. Taking as her starting point one of Kuntze’s works, she examines this artist’s self-staging strategy in the multinational artistic environment of the Rome of the second half of the 18th century.

The articles by Galina Mardilovich and Jan Zachariáš look at the question of the impact of artistic travels on innovation in the areas of genre and technique in reproductive printmaking and 19th-century landscape painting respectively. Both texts examine the fundamental issue of self-positioning of Russian artists and art in relation to leading centres of Western art and its masterpieces in an age when Russian art was seeking its “national character”.

While providing an important contribution to the research on artists’ mobility in Central and Eastern Europe, the case studies presented here lay no claim to an exhaustive treatment of this broadly delineated theme. Neither do they answer all the questions surrounding the mobility of artists in Central and Eastern.

It is nonetheless to be hoped that this publication will offer inspiration for further studies and trans-border research projects, which will bring us closer to a better understanding of the phenomenon of mobility among artists and its consequences, as well as help us to improve our research methods in this field.

Translated by Jessica Taylor-Kucia

Endnotes

1. Cf. The case of Veit Stoss: Sabine Arend, *Die (kultur-)politische Instrumentalisierung von Veit Stoss im Nationalsozialismus*, in: A. Organisty, D. Horzela (eds.), *Wokół Wita Stwosza. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej w Muzeum Narodowym w Krakowie 19 - 22 maja 2005* [Around Veit Stoss. Papers of an international conference in the National Museum in Cracow 19 - 22 Mai 2005], Kraków 2006, p. 396-405.
2. Cf. A.S. Labuda, *Der Künstler im Osten um 1500. Ansichten und Forschungsmodelle*, in: *Die Jagiellonen. Kunst und Kultur einer europäischen Dynastie an der Wende zur Neuzeit*, eds. D. Popp and R. Suckale, Nürnberg 2002, p. 19-25, here p. 20.
3. Cf. E.g. *Wanderungen: Künstler – Kunstwerk – Motiv – Stifter*, Beiträge der 10. Tagung des Arbeitskreises deutscher und polnischer Kunsthistoriker in Warschau, eds. Małgorzata Omilanowska, Anna Straszewska, Warszawa 2005; Agnieszka Gašior, *Hans Süß von Kulmbachs Krakauer Karriere*, in: *Künstlerische Wechselwirkungen in Mitteleuropa, Ostfeldern 2006*, eds. J. Fajt u. M. Hörsch, p. 325-346; Evelyn Reitz, *Filiation durch Wanderschaft: die Erfahrung der Fremde als generierendes Prinzip in der Prager Kunst um 1600*, in: *Berichte und Forschungen*, 14. 2006, p. 228-238; Marina Dmitrieva, *Italien in Sarmatien*; *Studien zum Kulturtransfer im östlichen Europa in der Zeit der Renaissance*, Stuttgart 2008.
4. Cf. e.g. recently Uwe Fleckner, *In die Welt geschickt: künstlerische Mobilität vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart*, in: *Der Künstler in der Fremde. Migration, Reise, Exil*, ed. U. Fleckner, Berlin 2015, p. 1-23.
5. *Circulations in the global history of art*, eds. Thomas Da-Costa Kaufmann, Catherine Dossin, and Béatrice Joyeux-Prunel, Franham 2015.

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