

Waldemar Józef Deluga**THE ART IN CENTRAL EUROPE BETWEEN LATIN
AND BYZANTINE TRADITIONS***

The art in the countries of Central Europe, related to both the Latin and Byzantine traditions, belongs to a culturally diverse set, which is an interesting area of comparative research. In the 1960s, art historians sought new solutions to the study of European art. Changes in the borders of virtually all countries in the region caused great difficulties in the way of practising the humanities, including the history of art. Communist propaganda, censorship, and control of scientific life resulted in many scholars meeting the requirements of the authorities. At that time, the so-called nativeness was promoted and many art historians took up the inventory of monuments. The article presents profiles of art historians whose works are important for our considerations: Jan Białostocki, Layos Vayer, Răzvan Theodoreșcu, Janina Kłosińska. I mention important initiatives in the region, such as Niedzica Seminars, 1980-1991, organised by Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian art historians. But there was no presentation of the Eastern Christian monuments. Most art historians considered eastern Christian art in Central Europe to be provincial and classified it as ethnographic. Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians did not have a chance to meet with the outside world. Dominated by centralised institutions in Moscow and Leningrad, they did not go beyond their own circle. However, they prepared the foundation for future research conducting inventory works and protecting monuments in museums. Vira Svientsitska, Pavel Zholtovsky, and Borys Voznitsky protected the monuments as much as they could save. After 1989 the countries of the former 'Eastern Bloc' regained their independence, and there was an era of free scientific research, without censorship and borders. The art of the Christian East has entered scholarly circulation, but still insufficiently. This article highlights some examples of this disparity.

Keywords: *art, Byzantine tradition, Latin tradition, art historians, scientific dialogue.*

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The art in the countries of Central Europe, related to both the Latin and Byzantine traditions, belongs to a culturally diverse set, which is an interesting area of comparative research.¹ Here the boundary of influence of the two traditions of Western and Eastern Christianity meet, and many scholars have thought about creating an understanding between art historians representing different nations. The experiences of the 20th and 21st centuries, wars, and totalitarian regimes for almost the entire century do not allow for an objective dialogue. The last thirty years have been a period of struggle between our own value systems and the implanted proposals of the West. So, let us go back to the past; maybe we can return to creating our own research proposals?

* The first presentation of this topic took place at a conference *Rethinking Ukraine and Europe: New Challenges for Historians in Vilnius* in September 2023. Special thanks would like to be extended to Katja Bernhardt, co-organizer of the meeting in Lithuania.

¹ The monument to the geographical center of Europe was erected in Dilowe, Ukraine in 1887 over a master mark of the precision leveling of the Military Geographical Institute from Vienna, the original of which has been preserved to this day with latin inscription: *Locus Perennis Diligentissime cum libella librationis quae est in Austria et Hungaria confecta cum mensura gradum meridionalium et parallelorum quam Europeum. MDCCCLXXXVII.*

In the 1960s, art historians in Central Europe sought new solutions in the study of European art. The Khrushchev thaw period allowed for somewhat freer scientific research in some communistic countries (Nodl, Węcowski, Zupka, eds. 2004). Changes in the borders of virtually all countries in the region caused great difficulties in the way of practising the humanities, including the history of art. Communist propaganda, censorship, and control of scientific life resulted in many scholars meeting the requirements of the authorities. At that time, the so-called nativeness was promoted as a counterweight to national research resulting from patriotic premises. Many art historians who did not engage in methodological discussions took up the inventory of monuments. This is how the Catalogue of Monuments of Art in Poland, Catalogue of Monuments in Czechoslovakia, and many museum catalogues were created. Only some scholars, following the experience of researchers from France, Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, tried to develop new methods.

Jan Białostocki was interested in the research of Hans Erich Kubach, who created a new term for German-speaking areas: the Great Region in his considerations on Romanesque art (Kubach and Bloch, 1964, p.7; Deluga, 1994, p.328; Deluga, 1995, p.337). The Polish art historian extended the understanding of the mentioned geographical area to the whole of Central Europe, including not only Romanesque art, but also Gothic and Renaissance art. A community with close relations between centers is evidenced by equally developing artistic trends, although time differences were noticed between them in the assimilation of new motifs in a given area. This is what allowed Białostocki to develop his considerations in the case of the Northern and Southern Renaissance (Białostocki, 1976, p.17; Białostocki, 1978, p.9), or the mannerism of the Baltic area (Michalski, 1999, p.54).

Yet, in his monograph on Renaissance art, he did not dare to dissociate himself from perceiving this part of Europe as the East. This is how the Americans and the Western world saw this part of Europe under Soviet domination. That is why a book published in New York on the Renaissance art of the House of Anjou and Jagiellonian era had to have Eastern Europe in the title to be understood by the readers (Białostocki, 1976). Thomas DaCosta-Kaufmann in his review enthusiastically proposed to develop the subject (DaCosta-Kaufmann, 1978, p.164-169; Jurkowlanec, 2013, p.809-816). A decade later he propagated the ideas initiated by Białostocki. After many years, he published a book, which will become a continuation (DaCosta-Kaufmann, 1995). In the case of Eastern Christian art, in a small article included in the commemorative book in honor of Ihor Shevchenko, Białostocki clearly emphasizes its connections with the entire community of modern Europe, explaining the special role of Leopoldis, a city extremely important for the two friends (Białostocki, 1983, p.53).

Similar studies have been conducted by Hungarians. For the representatives of a nation whose country has radically changed its borders and many of its kin remained abroad, the postwar world became very difficult, especially for intellectuals. There were attempts to present publications on monuments related to the history of the Kingdom of Hungary located on the territories of Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia, but they did not dare to go beyond the Hungarian speaking area. Only Layos Vayer published internationally and tried to develop new research criteria. Certainly, the idea of the Danubian School promoted by Germans and Austrians allowed the Magyars to develop their research (Wutzel, ed., 1965). Vayer was one of the first to frame the area of Central Europe as the place between two vertical lines on the map of Europe (fig. 1). One line connects the area of the Frisian Islands in the Netherlands with the Gulf of Genoa, while the other runs from the Gulf of Riga to the eastern shore of the Adriatic (Vayer, 1972, p.19-29). His Romanian colleague Răzvan Theodoreșcu saw the need to develop comparative studies between Krakow and Constantinople in modern times (Theodoreșcu, 1982, p.341-351; Theodoreșcu, 1983, p.3-11; Theodoreșcu, 1990, p.35-56). It pointed to Moldavia, where three traditions, Latin, Byzantine and Islam, met. Following Tadeusz Mańkowski, he noticed the influence of the

Orient on the art of Central Europe (Grusiecki, 2023). In the 1980s, several exhibitions in Krakow, Warsaw, and Budapest contributed to the development of research.

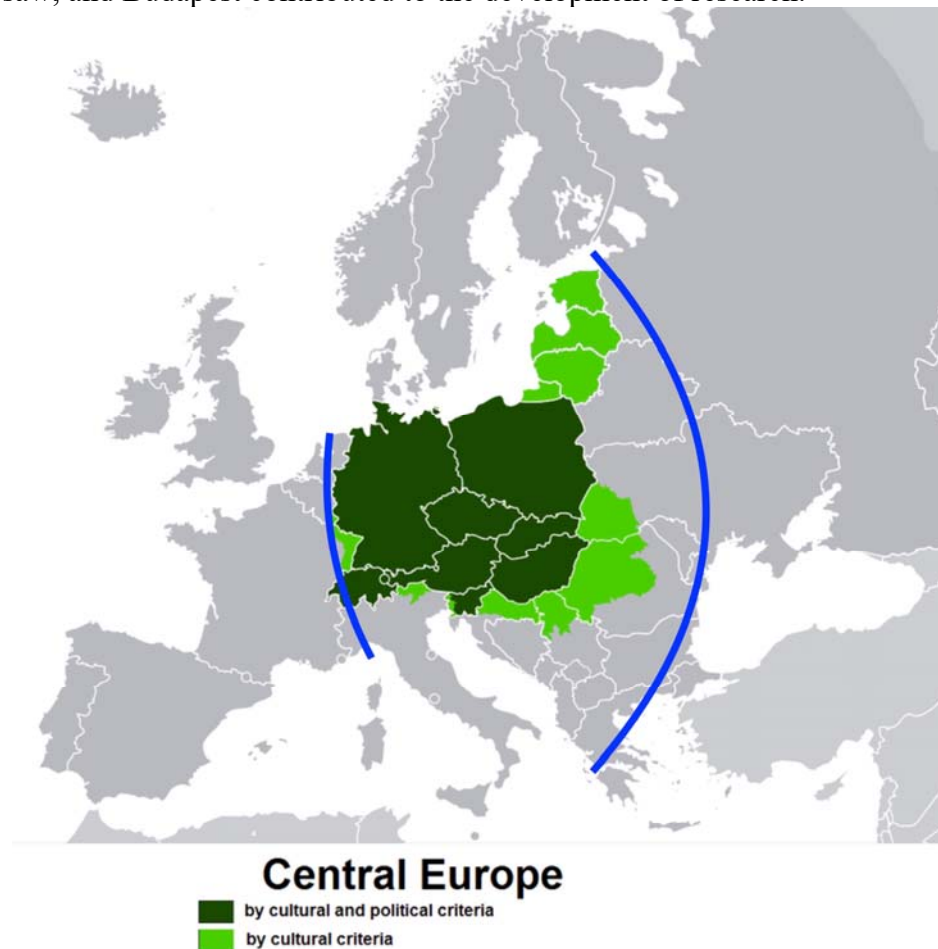


Fig. 1. Map of Central Europe according to the criteria proposed by Layos Vayer (blue line)

In the late 1970s of the twentieth century, participants of international meetings began a broader discussion. One of the innovative initiatives of Polish, Czech, Slovak, and Hungarian art historians was the organisation of the Niedzica Seminars, 1980-1991. Art historians from different countries met at the Niedzica Castle in Spisz (fig. 2), an important place in the history of Poland, Hungary, and Slovakia. The culmination of the Seminars was the publication of seven volumes of the *Seminaria Niedzickie*, which provided extensive comparative material for studies on the societies of Central Europe, including medieval and modern art, history of portrait, etc. Despite many obstacles of a political nature, they managed to organise exceptionally interesting meetings that contributed to the knowledge of the scientific activity of their neighbours. But there was no presentation of the Eastern Christian monuments. And yet, from Niedzica, the first village with a Lemko Greek-catholic church is located within a radius of 15 kilometres (Jaworki, fig. 3). Here is the border between the Byzantine and the Latin world. For example, in Slovakia we can visit the medieval church in Dravce (fig. 4), where fragments of Byzantine mural paintings have been preserved.

Most art historians considered eastern Christian art in Central Europe to be provincial and classified it as ethnographic. The local authorities promoted the idea of creating wooden architecture museums, in the Scandinavian form of Skansens.

Eastern Christian art in Central Europe clearly shows territorial autonomy, regardless of administrative and state divisions; hence Janina Kłosińska's proposal to call icon painting created in today's South-Eastern Poland, Eastern Slovakia, Western Ukraine, Moldavia, and

Transylvania a Carpathian icon (Kłosińska, 1973, 1966; Kłosińska, Zinowiev, 1987, p.12-24; Deluga, 2001, p.233-242). In the 1970s, Slovaks, Hungarians, and Romanians published works on icons, which were most often recognised as works of folk art. Several important monographs have been written in Ukraine, but due to the language barrier, they did not enter scientific circulation beyond the borders of the then USSR. There, too, the works of Ukrainian or Belarusian church art were considered folk in Soviet historiography.



Fig. 2. The Niedzica Castle



Fig. 3. The Greek-catholic church in Jaworki, Poland



Fig. 4. The St. Elisabeth church in Dravce, Slovakia

Ukrainians, Belarusians, and Lithuanians did not have the opportunity to meet with the outside world. Dominated by centralised institutions in Moscow and Leningrad, they did not go beyond their own circle. However, they prepared the foundation for future research by conducting inventory works and protecting monuments in museums. Vira Svientsitska, Pavel Zholtovsky, and Borys Voznitsky protected monuments as much as they could save. The publications of Mieczysław Gębarowicz should be mentioned (Gębarowicz, 1976, p.138-154).

After 1989, in the following years, the countries of the former 'Eastern Bloc' regained their independence. There was an era of free scientific research, without censorship and borders. Belarusians and Ukrainians are building a strong group of scholars who have published hundreds of new articles and books. However, there was still a language barrier, but also a symbolic barrier of borders, despite the possibility of free movement before 2004. Poles, Ukrainians, Belarusians on the one hand, and Romanians, Slovaks, and Hungarians on the other built their historiographies in parallel. These are primarily patriotic reasons, which today are often classified as nationalist tendencies. Everyone had their own reasons and did not argue with the others. The Poles were interested in the *Polonica*, the Hungarians in *Magiarica*, the Germans *Germanica*, and the others in the heritage of their own nations exclusively. Likewise, Israelis are concerned only with Jewish art. Ukrainians and Belarusians recognised Orthodox and Greek-catholic art as their national heritage, and only these issues were dealt with for more than two decades. The publications were created in parallel, yes, quoting each other, but without reflection and arguments.

Let one project testify to how barriers continue to arise. In the study of Medieval art of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, no space to the monuments that have survived in the territory of today's western Ukraine or Belarus. In general monographs, there are no examples of preserved specific paintings, sculptures, or goldsmithing, but some of them from the former Ruthenian Voivodeship have survived. Paul Crossley who published a book about Medieval architecture during the reign of Casimir the Great, was unable to include medieval monuments from the eastern part of the Polish Kingdom, from the territory

of the Halych-Volynia Principality, as at this time it was impossible to do research in the territory of former Soviet Ukraine (Crossley, 1985).

In Polish literature only in the case of architecture was the cathedral of Lviv included in the canon of Gothic buildings. Yet in that city there are remains of Gothic decorations in tenement houses located on the Market Square, or fragments of the Golden Rose Synagogue. In other cities, we see extant medieval elements, such as those in Drohobych, not to mention Gothic elements in the architecture on the border of historical Moldavia (Khotyn castle), which in the 15th and 16th centuries was closely related to Poland as its fief. Certainly, comparative research between Lviv, Suceava and Iasi, initiated before the war by Bohdan Janusz and Petre Panaitescu, will bring interesting results.

The great exhibition of the Art of the Jagiellonian Era in 2012, organised in Kutná Hora, Warsaw, and Dresden, did not include works from the cradle of the Jagiellonian dynasty, i.e. Lithuania, not to mention monuments from Ukraine (Fajt, ed., 2012; Grzęda, 2013, 387-398) *Europa Jagiellonica* without Lithuanians, Belarusians, and Ukrainians?

The next exhibition organised at the Wawel Royal Castle in Krakow in 2023 presented several icons from Polish collections, and an editorial article appears in the catalogue (Piech, Wolańska, Ziętkiewicz-Kotz, ed., 2023). The image of the Golden Age, i.e. the flowering of culture and art in the Polish-Lithuanian state under the rule of Sigismund I and Sigismund Augustus, but again without works from neighbouring countries (three objects were shown from Lithuania), and the art of Eastern Christianity were shown only marginally. The image of the art of this powerful international dynasty needs to be changed.



Fig. 5. St. George slaying the dragon, 15th century, National Museum, Lviv

So let us look at some examples of Gothic art in Ukraine. Preserved medieval paintings from the former Ruthenian Voivodeship show the close relationship between Polish and Hungarian painting of the 15th and 16th centuries. A perfect example of it is the fragment from a Gothic altar from the Collection of the Historical Museum in Sanok, the Diocesan Museum in Przemyśl. Of course, such dispersed material does not allow for stylistic analysis.

Recall that imitations of engravings were very popular in central Europe. An example of this is a painting from the collection of the National Museum in Lviv showing *St. George slaying the dragon* (fig. 5). The composition was painted on the basis of an engraving by the Master of Playing Cards (Meister der Spielkarten) (Dobrowolski, 1973, p. 47-52).

It should be noted that Gothic-style artefacts were once found in Ukrainian Orthodox and Armenian churches. An example is the aforementioned work from Lviv. On the reverse of this painting, a composition was created as an icon depicting *Christ in the tomb*. The painting was located in the Orthodox monastery of Servant Sisters in Slovita near Zolochiv. Similarly, the image showing St. Margaret and a fragment of St. Dorota from the collection of the Museum in Ivano Frankivsk comes from an unknown village near Halych, from where it was brought (Mel'nyk, 2007, p.162, no. 1). In the documents of the former repository of monuments in Halych, it was noted that the painting was in the Galician Orthodox and later Greek-catholic church. It is not known exactly when such works were made. It can be assumed that after the Synod of Kraków in 1621, when church authorities ordered changes in the decoration of Catholic churches in accordance with the provisions of the Council of Trent, Latin works found their way to the provincial place but in also to the Orthodox churches. It should be remembered that at that time the icon continued to operate in the traditional Byzantine formal idioms. It was not until the mid-seventeenth century that new patterns appeared for Ukrainian religious painting. This is why panel painting was acceptable to Ukrainians, because it was similar in terms of technique to icons. In the first half of the 17th century, Ukrainian art slowly became influenced by Latin art.

Similar changes were taking place in the Armenian Church. The medieval paintings came from the Armenian cathedral, probably later. It is the *Maiestas Crucis* and *St. Jerome*. Similarly, in Kamieniec Podolski there was a miraculous image of the Mother of God with the Child, a work probably created in Lesser Poland (Hayuk, 2012, p. 338, fig. 486). Among the analogies, it is worth mentioning a painting from the collection of the Museum in Żywiec.

It should be mentioned that in Armenian art there are elements from Latin iconography, which means that they willingly used patterns developed by the local elites. An example of such phenomenon could be found among the wall paintings in the Armenian cathedral in Lviv. It is a composition showing the *St. Jacob Compostela* (fig. 7) (Chrzęszczewski, 2001, p. 240). On the outer wall of the cloisters, we can see a fragment showing *Mary in the temple*.

Gothic elements also appear in icon painting from the 16th century. These are, for example, entire representations of Latin provenance, such as the scene showing *St. George* (fig. 6) from the collection of the National Museum in Lviv (Deluga, 2019, p. 126, fig. 56). A rider on a horse is shown in accordance with the canon of representations in German graphic art of the second half of the 15th century, but the painting is a few decades later. These are, for example, background decorations and ornaments, but also changing the shape of the letters of the Cyrillic alphabet in the Gothic form. A group of icons from the collection of the National Museum of Lviv and the Historical Museum in testifies to this. In the National Museum in Krakow we will find an icon with a Gothic frame.

Medieval illustrations from Church Slavonic books published in Prague, Kraków, Vilnius, and Lviv played an important role in the transmission of Gothic-style engravings and woodcuts. However, that is a topic for a separate presentation.



Fig. 6. St. George, icon from 16th century, National Museum, Lviv



Fig. 7. St. St. Jacob Compostela and St. Prochorus, mural painting in the Armenian cathedral in Lviv

It can be assumed that this process resulted from the changes taking place in the churches. The synod of Kraków in 1621 for the Catholic Church has the continuation in the other confessions, for Orthodox the union of churches in Brest (1595/96), and then the synod of Zamość in 1720, and finally the union of the Armenian Church with Rome in 1630, all contributed to changes in the furnishing of sacred buildings. The interiors of the church were slowly Latinized, and the old items probably ended up in the provinces.

The second example is the myth of the destruction of monuments from the times of Kyivan Rus and the lack of continuation in the modern era. This myth was initiated by Soviet scholars and taken over by the West, as evidenced by the last exhibition in Paris *Holy Rus* (Deluga, 2022). Even today, discussions about the legacy of Kyiv's art, the exhibitions for examples organized in the past, take place without reflection, is this really true?



Fig. 8. Last Judgment, mural painting in the Vyduhiv monastery, Kyiv

The conservation processes of the murals in the 19th century, and above all the Soviet pseudorestorations, were not properly examined. Both were aimed at discovering remains from the times of Kyivan Rus. Today, modern research technologies make it possible to analyse old photographs as well as excavations that are visible in many churches in the capital city of Ukraine. For example, the Orthodox church of the Vyduhiv monastery (fig. 8) with presentation of the Last Judgment (after the engraving prototype of Jan Sadeler). Fragments depicting the Angel at Christ's tomb were probably made at the end of the 16th century, because probably the model from Kyivan Rus time was repainted according to the Balkan style?

Here, you can give another implementation, from the church of Spas in Berestovo, specifically the *Annunciation* (fig. 9). Are we sure that this painting was created in the times of Peter Mohyla? Perhaps they should also be dated to the end of the 16th century, but the

first composition was create centuries ago. The canon of Byzantine iconography requires exact repetition of the model. The myth of the destruction of Kyivan Rus and the times of 'ruin' in the capital city until the beginning of the 17th century continues. The other question is about sources of painting decoration between Greek and Moldavian traditions (Kondratiuk, 2022, p. 81-88). It should also be mentioned that today's district of Padol, once an autonomous city on the river, has not been destroyed for centuries. Certainly, further technological research and analysis of archaeological and conservation documentation will bring many interesting observations. And my examples are provocative in nature to stimulate researchers' reflection.



Fig. 9. The Annunciation, the church of Spas in Berestovo, Kyiv

There are multiple examples, but it is worth considering what to do in the future. Representatives of nations stick to their value systems and should be free to express their views without external discussion. Concessions may be made in this discussion, but there is no need to impose Anglo-Saxon value systems and make an intellectual carbon copy of it. The West can learn the languages and history of the peoples of eastern part of Central Europe. Then they will understand the differences in mentality in the modern world.

We will argue for decades to come, each of us representing a different point of view (Bernhardt, Born, Kapustka, Kempe, Lipińska, Störtkuhl, 2023, p. 12-43). We are from different countries, we have different experiences and different perspectives (Grusiecki, 2012, p. 3-26; Grusiecki and Radway, ed., 2022, p. 11-47). What will be important in our future research to establish understanding between scholars represent different view?

Perhaps, to begin with, presentations of various opinions and discussions, and in the meantime publications of unknown, damaged or stolen monuments, so as to reconstruct the artistic panorama of Central Europe, both the Latin and Byzantine worlds, while expanding the concept of this part of continent.

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МИСТЕЦТВО ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЇ ЄВРОПИ МІЖ ЛАТИНСЬКИМИ ТА ВІЗАНТИЙСЬКИМИ ТРАДИЦІЯМИ

Мистецтво країн Центральної Європи, пов'язане як з латинською, так і з візантійською традиціями, належить до культурно різноманітного комплексу, що є цікавою сферою порівняльних досліджень. У 1960-х роках історики мистецтва шукали нових рішень для вивчення європейського мистецтва. Зміни кордонів практично всіх країн регіону спричинили великі труднощі у практиці гуманітарних наук, включаючи історію мистецтва. Комуністична пропаганда, цензура та контроль над науковим життям призвели до того, що багато вчених почали виконувати вимоги влади. У той

час пропагувалася так звана нативність, і багато істориків мистецтва взялися за інвентаризацію пам'яток. У статті представлені профілі істориків мистецтва, чії праці є важливими для наших розглядів: Ян Білостоцький, Лайош Вайер, Резван Теодорешку, Яніна Клосінська. Я згадую важливі ініціативи в регіоні, такі як семінари в Неджиці, 1980-1991, організовані польськими, чеськими, словацькими та угорськими істориками мистецтва. Але презентації східнохристиянських пам'яток не було. Більшість істориків мистецтва вважали східнохристиянське мистецтво в Центральній Європі провінційним і класифікували його як етнографічне. Українці, білоруси та литовці не мали можливості зустрітися із зовнішнім світом. Перебуваючи під домінуванням централізованих установ у Москві та Ленінграді, вони не виходили за межі свого кола. Однак вони підготували основу для майбутніх досліджень, проводячи інвентаризаційні роботи та охороняючи пам'ятки в музеях. Віра Свенціцька, Павло Жолтовський та Борис Возницький захищали пам'ятки, наскільки могли. Після 1989 року країни колишнього «Східного блоку» відновили свою незалежність, і настала епоха вільних наукових досліджень без цензури та кордонів. Мистецтво Християнського Сходу увійшло в науковий обіг, але все ще недостатньо. У цій статті висвітлено деякі приклади цієї нерівності.

Ключові слова: мистецтво, візантійська традиція, латинська традиція, історики мистецтва, науковий діалог.