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HISTORICAL OBJECTS IN ARCHITECTURAL SKETCHES. WILL THEY REMAN A THEME IN ARTWORK?

ZABYTKI W SZKICACH ARCHITEKTONICZNYCH. BYŁY, SĄ, A CZY BĘDĄ MOTYWEM TWÓRCZOŚCI?

Abstract

Sketch is understood as a spontaneous, quick and synthetic drawing. Architectural sketches have a long history as well as numerous circumstances and reasons behind their creation. They were created as records of the reality – to emphasize key elements, as travelling notes, and also as preparation or study drawings before a finalization of a design or a painting. Typically they remained in private collections of their authors and were published only rarely. Nowadays such sketches and drawings provide a valuable insight into the methodology of work of well-known artists and constitute a source of knowledge of history and of the previous form of the objects they are depicting. The draftsmen can be divided into faithful and precise documentalists and artists expressing their personal, free vision and effects of their imagination.

Keywords: architectural sketches, historical drawings

Streszczenie

Szkic rozumiany jest jako spontaniczny, szybki, syntetyczny rysunek. Szkice architektoniczne mają długą tradycję i różnorodne okoliczności i cele powstania – tworzono je jako zapisy rzeczywistości – akcentujące najważniejsze elementy jako notatniki z podróży, rysunki przygotowawcze, studialne przed ostateczną wersją projektu czy obrazu. Zazwyczaj pozostawały w prywatnych zbiorach autorów, rzadko były publikowane. Obecnie szkice i rysunki robocze są środkiem poznania metod pracy znanych twórców, a także źródłem wiedzy o historii i dawnej postaci ilustrowanych w nich obiektów. Postawy rysowników można podzielić na wiernych i ścisłych obserwatorów i dokumentalistów oraz artystów wyrażających osobistą, swobodną wizję i grę wyobraźni.

Słowa kluczowe: szkice architektury, historyczne rysunki

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1. Introduction

How can one quickly prepare a sketch of a historical object? Using several commands in a few minutes one can transform a digital photography into a linear sketch-like drawing. Naturally it is a kind of a graphical play, a trick, but the risk of false interpretation and application is nevertheless present. A draftsman spending numerous hours on a location to sketch from nature apparently loses to the “drawing machine”. One starts to doubt as to the sense of author’s own representations and the sense of drawing practice since an apparently similar effect can be easily and readily obtained using a computer. Let us go back to the times when views were drawn directly and when there were no tools to facilitate the work of an artist.

2. Review

We shall examine sketches of historical objects left by previous generations of painters and architects who were active either for study or work reasons in Krakow. Why shall we consider Krakow, its historical objects and their sketches? The grounds are abundant. The architecture of Krakow, rich in style and form, has been fascinating artists for a long time. The high saturation of the city’s tissue with historical artwork was providing both inspiration and numerous possibilities of expression through architecture. Architectural sketches were created by Jerzy Głogowski, Józef Brodowski, Jan Niepomucen Głowacki, Aleksander Gryglewski, Franciszek Turek, Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, Franciszek Mączyński and many others¹. The historical architectural patterns of Krakow painted and drawn by them, still exist, and can be recognized on sketches from before 200 years. Concentration of the artists’ community in Krakow was related to the presence of the first academies of arts, associations and painting traditions (the oldest guilds). From here there originate the first collections and exhibitions and museums in the 19th century, as well as the interest in historical objects and their maintenance and preservation. The development of writing influenced the area of artwork through numerous orders for figures, i.e. drawings, pictures transferred next into engravings. In museums and archives of Krakow original drawings and their reproductions have been preserved. This enables comparisons between the original and a copy, the draftsman’s style and the workshop and precision of a copyist (e.g. of Władysław Łuszczkiewicz – the analysis of which indicates that reproductions didn’t fully replicate the precision and vividness of the original works retained in a sketchbook of 1869–1871 and depicting sculptures, domes, lanterns and other architectural details)².

For weekly published magazines there drew such artists of Krakow as Aleksander Gierymski and Maksymilian Gierymski, Józef Pankiewicz, Waclaw Podkowiński, Stanisław Witkiewicz. Well-known woodcutter Władysław Klein reproduced paintings of Józef Brandt, Józef Chełmoński, and pastels of Teodor Axentowicz. Figures and texts in the 19th century magazines were of equivalent weight. In the second half of the 19th century reproductions of photographs were also made.

¹ J. Banach, *Kraków malowniczy*, Kraków 1980.

² M. Rzepińska, *Władysław Łuszczkiewicz – malarz i pedagog*, Kraków 1983.

Another repertory of interest from the comparison standpoint comprises collections of oil paintings and sketches made during their realization. E.g. of Gryglewski who realized a large number of paintings representing church interiors of Krakow as well as left drawings which have identical content, composition and size as the paintings.

Browsing through rich collections we are considering which of the values of the old drawings representing old objects are timeless and universal. Historical, source and cognitive values are definitive and iconography still remains a subject of studies and serves a purpose in cognition of history and in preservation and reconstruction activities. However, do the aesthetic and artistic values speak to the recipients nowadays? Can a draftsman today be inspired by this legacy, can they learn from it, enjoy it and use it as a model or maybe even continue it?

And how do these old drawings compare to the modern ones? Do they appear archaic? Let us consider for instance sketches of the tenement houses of the Kanonicza Street, Wawel Royal Castle and the Main Square with St. Mary's Church – which appear throughout the works of F. Mączyński and H. Walter – these can be considered modern works, yet they were created one hundred years ago. The architecture of Krakow remains in the same form, one easily recognizes streets, corners, facades and cresting. Clearly visible is the similarity to the model, clear composition, flawless perspective, vivid line and aesthetic finishing – all requirements of the architectural sketch recommended by modern teachers are complied with to the full extent.

Is thus the language of the drawing so constant, or the teaching methods have remained similar...? Referring to the comments of professor Bruzda on sketch drawing: "The process in perspective sketch drawing proceeds from general observations to detail. This rule is realized in stages. Each of the stages is characterized by its main task, and all of them, to a varying extent, contain also problems from other stages. As a consequence each stage serves also as a correction of the results of the previous ones. The first stage can be considered almost completely point based, with only vague linear silhouette obtained through joining of the characteristic fragments. The purpose is to mark the key dimensions and the localizations of the most important elements. The next stage involves gradual particularization of the elements following an order of decreasing importance. This stage is executed through a division of the entirety into its building blocks. The order of work in this stage follows the sheer hierarchy of the building elements. First, a division into the most principal elements is made and next one moves towards the details. The gradual departure from the overall shape of the object towards a form more precisely expressing all of its features is accompanied by the introduction of construction elements represented by symmetry, rhythms, proportions, angles and perspective elements"³. The 19th century teaching methods through a study of sketch are still considered in the curricula and textbooks of academies of arts in Krakow. The methods for the development of drawing skills, developed by old masters, are documents in memoirs of students, who later became artists and teachers⁴.

The teaching of drawing in the 19th century was divided into several stages and categories. Hand, measurement, geometrical and technical drawing, professional and compositional and

³ J. Bruzda, *Szkice perspektywiczne*, Kraków 1993.

⁴ J. Fałat, *Pamiętniki*, Katowice 1987.

modeling exercises were distinguished. The teaching would begin with drawing of outlines of simple shaped objects, then would focus on copying of plaster torsos and in the end it involved drawing of a human silhouette and a landscape. The practical exercises were extended with theory and history of architecture, i.e. teaching of the order by Vignola and of the perspective, plans and facades according to Andrea Pozzo. The aim of these classes was to train the eye and to develop the taste. In Krakow drawing was taught by known painters – J. Brodowski, J. N. Głowacki and M. Stachowicz. In the second half of the 19th century such painters as M. Cercha, S. Świerzyński, W. Łuszczkiewicz worked as teachers of drawing. They emphasized the educational and developmental importance of drawing exercises and were of the opinion that the purpose of the teaching is “to provide the rules of drawing based on reasoning and training the eye in picture observations”. They would not consider, however, the teaching of drawing artistry.

Draftsman and architecture painter J. Brodowski, lecturer at the Academy of Arts, underscored the importance of drawing, considering it a “soul of painting, engraving etc.”. In his opinion each future painter, engraver and sculptor had to gain knowledge on the “rules of drawing”. The drawing was supposed to be understood a basis of artist’s work and all artists were supposed to spend large amounts of time on exercises needed to “perfect the talent and the taste”⁵.

The teaching of architects is described in the memoirs of professor Władysław Ekielski: „In the second half of the 19th century, having higher aspirations in architecture, almost all of us studied abroad. Colleagues from Krakow studied in Berlin: S. Odrzywolski and K. Zaremba, from Lwow: Hochberger, Gorgolewski and Stryjeński in Zurich and partially in Paris; Zawiejski, Pokutyński, I and J. Kremer in Wien, and then in Lwow, J. Zubrzycki in Lwow. F. Księżarski in Metz, M. Moraczewski in Berlin. Not having a trustworthy school in the country we have dispersed over Europe and in line with the environment in which we were gathering our knowledge, we were penetrated by the school, teachers’ rules and even the culture of the various European societies we lived in. For that reason, one familiar with the architecture of modern European cities will find related objects in our cities.

Students in Paris were taught to prepare ground plans – for more important buildings always with the use of an axial plan in the background, with consideration of practically all details, which were pursued to the full extent of their practical implications. Hence the background of the composition in the works of Stryjeński, and later in the works of Gravier, i.e. plans of Stryjeński are almost always perfect”⁶.

Let us return to sketches, their creators, subject area and purpose. Sketches made by 17th and 18th century painters were typically preparatory works, notices for the actual paintings. Artists like Rembrandt, Guardi mastered the art of drawing with a pen, and the skill of pen and wash – all these were however only exercises before an oil painting. Sketches of historical objects in the 19th century served numerous purposes: they praised, documented and recorded objects endangered with destruction, they popularized. We shall refer now to several leading draftsmen and their works:

⁵ M. Opalińska, *Józef Brodowski, malarz i rysownik starego Krakowa*, Kraków 2005.

⁶ K. Estreicher, *Dwa wspomnienia*, *Rocznik Krakowski*, 46, 1975.

J. Głogowski, 1777–1838, was the author of drawings depicting the fortified walls of Krakow which were demolished in the first half of the 19th century, he created numerous drawings and watercolor paintings of gates, archways, flanking towers and ramparts.

J. Brodowski, 1780–1853, draftsman and painter, is known as a documentalist of objects endangered with destruction. He would complement his detailed drawings with remarks and large representations of important details.

J. N. Głowacki, 1802–1847, prepared drawings of historical architectural objects which were published in a lithography album of 24 views of Krakow and its vicinity.

A. Gryglewski, 1833–1879, author of cityscapes, became well known for his very precise, documentary in nature, views of historical objects, which testify to his excellent knowledge of the perspective. An example of a drawing and an oil painting of Kanonicza street by that author can be used to understand the painter's workshop and the role of the drawing in painting (Ill. 1, 2).

F. Mączyński, architect, 1874–1947, designer of numerous building in Krakow, was also a keen draftsman of streets, allays and details of Krakow. The drawing of Kanonicza street was made in 1905 (Ill. 3, 4).

Collections of drawings made by these authors represent sketches from nature, handmade with pencil or pen. They were intended mainly to be reproduced as figures. The drawing constituted the pattern that was cut in stone or wood. Objects were presented using a realistic convention.

The realistic convention meant high degree of similarity and precision of the reproduction. The artist took the position of a faithful and precise spectator. They were working under the concept of iconographic documentary. The realistic nature of the drawing was in certain cases very strict and advanced, without any kind of staffage, with no life, persons, vehicles, vegetation or landscape.

A separate convention constituted the impression, the vision. A drawing is in such case a note of impression and describes the important, general features of the object. An autonomous artist would create a vision of a landscape or of objects as a unification of impressions and feelings from the play with their imagination. The artist would focus only on a fragment of the reality, on interesting details and general impression. One could notice a free and vivid sketch as well as lack of precision in the work of the hand and the eye. Works of S. Noakowski are an excellent example, and are compared to poems on architecture. His sketches are full of freedom, purposeful discretions, free associations and transformations and are a negation of the portraying of architecture.

A timeless value in drawings being visions or faithful views is the preservation of the general architectural heritage, praise of an architectural shape or revelation of a hidden, forgotten beauty. A draftsman would often become a vigilant guardian of the immunity of a historical object, would influence preservation attitudes and raise awareness that a historical object is a document only when it remains in its original, intact state. Old drawings prove that architecture was treated with respect and in a „con amore” manner. The artistic values of old drawings and paintings are not in balance with the iconographic and cognitive values. Representation with high aesthetic values but without a similarity to the actually existing objects represents smaller value in comparison to drawing which may be poor in the artistic aspects but faithfully represent the documented objects.

Nowadays the convention of realistic drawing of nature is considered almost an anachronism. It plays its important role in the artistic education, as a preparatory stage, but as artistic expressions it is encountered only rarely – very few artists draw portraits of architecture.

Starting with the second half of the 19th century photography replaced the effort of the draftsmen and gradually eliminated handmade sketches and studies. Nowadays it dominates the imagining of old and modern architecture. Computer- made visions of architecture being under development resemble photographs so closely that the spectator is unable to distinguish virtual elements from the real ones.

Computer made images are perfect from the technical standpoint, yet dehumanized and cold, stripped of the charm, atmosphere and sensuousness of handmade drawings.

Manual preparation of sketches or painting of architecture on location is a rarity today. The tradition disappears or is even skewed. A peculiar reversal of the teaching sense of sketching is taking place when students pretend sketching by replicating contours of a photograph without undertaking the work on location and with pencil notes. Yet the sketch was and shall remain an assistance facilitating understanding through observation. The method of drawing shall be to the maximum extent consistent with the process of thinking and shall express the results of observation and reasoning. The task of a draftsman is to accurately generalize plans, to emphasize the importance of the central theme, to eliminate unnecessary details. It is recommended to avoid in the perspective sketch a pre-assumed convention which could limit the freedom of creation. “The process of cognition, i.e. of gaining knowledge on a form, is undoubtedly an individual experience, which has undisputed influence on the diversity of creation”⁷.

3. Summary

In the future, sketches shall come back into favor and start to fulfill purposes of forming the imagination and taste, aid with popularization, speak to the recipient, sensitize to beauty and convince that drawing can serve the old architecture and at the same time act through its appeal. The idea of illustrating small guides with handmade sketches and drawn impressions, rather than nowadays common photographs, can be continued. On location exercises in historical surroundings can stimulate the interest in history and sensitize to the cultural heritage and the attitude of respecting it. Sketches have a chance to influence activities that ensure existence of historical objects and their remittance to the next generations in their complete form, i.e. with retained shape, composition and spatial-functional arrangement.

⁷ A. Białkiewicz, *Rola rysunku w warsztacie architekta*, Kraków 2004.



- III. 1. Aleksander Gryglewski, *Ulica Kanonicza*, akwarela i ołówek, 1869, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, nr inw. 529/III
- III. 2. Aleksander Gryglewski, *Ulica Kanonicza*, ołówek na kalce, zapewne 1869, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Rys. Pol., nr inw. 7668/29
- III. 3. Franciszek Mączyński, *Ulica Kanonicza*, 1905, rysunek ołówkiem, Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa, nr inw. 1430/VIII
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