

**Kraków 1940. Kampania fotograficzna**  
**Staatliche Bildstelle**  
**ed. Wojciech Walanus**  
**[Kraków 1940. The “Staatliche Bildstelle”**  
**photograph campaign]**

**Universitas, Kraków 2017**

For a long time now and in accordance with the western trend, interest in photography as a medium with a significant influence on the development of modern culture has been growing rapidly in Poland's liberal arts studies, and the history of photography holds an exceptional place in the ambit of their multidisciplinary research. It is not only albums that are now being published, but also scientific studies in which photographs are analyzed in both their social and political contexts. This latter political dimension of a photograph's function has proved to be incredibly interesting in the context of the history of totalitarian regimes making use of modern media for propaganda purposes. An example of one study which recently undertook this subject with regard to the Nazi photographic documentation of Polish works of art in the General Government (GG) is the book *Kraków 1940. Kampania fotograficzna “Staatliche Bildstelle”* [Kraków 1940. The “Staatliche Bildstelle” photograph campaign], published by Towarzystwo Autorów i Wydawców Prac Naukowych „Universitas” in late 2017 in the series “Skarby Fototeki Instytutu Historii Sztuki Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego” [“Treasures from the photo collections of the Jagiellonian University Institute of Art History”].

In addition to the short introduction under the penmanship of the editor of the entire volume, Wojciech Walanus, the present book is comprised of two extensive monographic theses written by Sabine Arend and Walanus himself, an annex detailing the symbols on the prints from the Jagiellonian University Institute of Art History (IHS UJ) by this latter author, as well as a detailed catalogue prepared by Anna Bednarek (a photography historian from the Museum of the City of Kraków) with illustrative material which makes up more than half of the entire publication (not to mention another insert with supplementary illustrations from other collections).

The editor of the present book is the director of the IHS UJ photo collection and a doctor of humanities (graduate of IHS UJ) formerly spe-

cialized in the history of late-medieval central European sculpture, but is currently known for his publications on the history of photography and particularly on the photographic documentation of monuments.<sup>2</sup> Walanus has already edited two previous volumes of “Skarby Fototeki”: *Cerkwie drewniane dawnej Galicji Wschodniej* [Wooden Orthodox churches in former Eastern Galicia] (2012) and *Sztuka na dawnych Kresach Wschodnich Rzeczypospolitej. Fotografie z XIX wieku* [Art in the former eastern borderlands of the Republic of Poland. Photography from the 19<sup>th</sup> century] (2013). The present volume is therefore his third successive publication and at the same time the first to be dedicated to a specific collection of photographs, distinguishing itself less by its subject than by the conditions surrounding its creation and intention.

The titular Cracovian “photograph campaign” in 1940 was the result of a campaign undertaken by the Staatliche Bildstelle (a specialized national institute headquartered in Berlin with roots stretching back to the Wilhemine era whose mission was to create and manage an all-Germany photographic archive) to document artistic monuments in occupied Poland. Wojciech Walanus in his essay presents the particular conditions leading up to the documentation campaign (Walanus, 2017). According to his findings, the Staatliche Bildstelle had plans to photograph the monuments located not only within the borders of the GG, but also in the Reichsgau Wartheland, in as early as November 1939. Although the initiator of this undertaking has never been established, the work of the Staatliche Bildstelle quickly became a topic of interest among those Second World War-era German art historians researching Poland’s artistic heritage with regard to its connection to German culture. However, this interest was not purely scientific. The consequent publications had clearly propagandistic aims; highlighting the Germanness of Polish monuments served to legitimize the Nazi invasion and at the same time to proclaim Polish culture as an apparently secondary and dependent phenomenon. Ultimately, the Staatliche Bildstelle was redirected to Belgium in the fall of 1940 following new conquests made by the Third Reich in the west. Its Polish campaign only left behind pictures from Kraków and its environs, many of which (more than one third) have been preserved in the collections of IHS UJ<sup>3</sup>.

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2 The biography of Wojciech Walanus is available in Polish at: <https://ihs.uj.edu.pl/fototeka/kierownik> [access 22.07.2019].

3 Prints with monuments from Kraków and the surrounding areas are also located in the Central Institute for Art History in Munich, the photo archives of the National Museums in Berlin, the Museum of Architecture at the Technical University of Berlin, the Herder Institute in Marburg and the Wawel Royal Castle among others, while part of the negatives have been retained in the Messbildarchiv at the Brandenburg National Conservators’ Office in Wünsdorf.

According to Walanus' findings, the work of Dagobert Frey had a significant impact on the subject of the Kraków pictures. The Viennese professor of art history at the University of Wrocław (and student of Max Dvořák, the author of 1916's famous *Katechismus der Denkmalpflege* [The Preservation Catechism]) was one of the leading researchers from the so-called *Ostforschung* circle (Marquand-Twarowski, 2016). He needed the Staatliche Bildstelle's photographs first and foremost as illustrations for his book *Krakau* (although he had previously planned a monograph on the art of all of "former" Poland), which was published in Berlin in 1941 as part of the series "Deutsche Lande, Deutsche Kunst" by the Deutsche Kunstverlag publishing house which for many years cooperated closely with the Staatliche Bildstelle. Kraków was presented by Frey as a "bastion" of Germanness, the justification for this thesis being the presentation of particularly valuable monuments associated with German artists and which stylistically represented the Gothic, Renaissance and Mannerism movements. He apparently found later artistic eras to be of lesser interest.

As mentioned, however, the Staatliche Bildstelle campaign also encompassed monuments outside Kraków, the photographing of which can also be attributed in part to having been inspired by Frey. These include views of the castles in Mirów and Chęciny, doubtlessly associated with the interest in defense construction reflected in the article *Deutscher Wehrbau im Osten* [German fortifications in the east] published in 1940 in "Die Kunst im Deutschen Reich". The collection left behind by the Staatliche Bildstelle also includes photographs of the palace and church in Krzeszowice (known as Kressendorf in the GG), related to the design work of Karl Friedrich Schinkel and valued by the Germans to such an extent that Hans Frank chose the palace, previously owned by the Potocki family, as his suburban seat (Schenk, 2010, p. 74). Moreover, there are also two photos of a peasant house in Biały Dunajec, which, in Walanus' assessment, may be an expression of the Germans' interest in the allegedly Germanic roots of the Podhale inhabitants.

Walanus' article, summarized above, is more comprehensive. The author also discusses, for example, the course of the photograph campaign, based not only on fragmented written sources, but also on a thorough iconographic analysis of the photographs themselves. The examination of, for example, weather conditions or indoor posters and other such details, that is to say chronological clues, allowed him to quite accurately date many of the photographs. It is difficult to offer any criticism of Walanus' theses, except to point out certain understatements that could mislead non-art historians as in the case of Schinkel who is mentioned as the architect of the Krzeszowice palace. The Berlin architect was indeed the author of the design, but the problem is that his work was only a loose inspiration for the actual designer, namely Franciszek Maria Lanci (Baraniewski, 1987, pp. 103–106; Stefański, 2005, p. 106). There is also a lack of deeper reflection on the selection of individual objects and an examina-

tion of them in the context of German discourse on the Germanic roots of Polish artistic heritage – I refer here not only to the obvious (for art historians) examples of works of German or Germanic provenance, such as the coffin of St. Stanislaus made by a Gdańsk goldsmith, the altar setting in the Sigismund chapel – a collective work of Nuremberg masters – or the Audience Hall at Wawel Castle with frescoes by Hans Dürer (the brother of Albrecht). The extensive group of objects with connections that are more Italianate than Germanic also deserves comment. These remarks, however, do not affect the overall very positive assessment of Walanus' dissertation.

Contrary to the aforementioned essay, the article by Sabine Arend (an employee of the Brandenburgische Gedenkstätten Foundation in Ravensbrück) (Arend, 2017) was not written specifically for this publication, but is a translation (with minor corrections and additions) of her earlier dissertation (Arend, 2010). The editor managed to obtain the author's consent to re-use this text, which should be considered a correct decision all the more so because it was previously only available in German. The institution examined by Arend was the main tool for promoting Nazi optics in Polish art history, which, as already mentioned, contributed to the legitimacy of the conquest of Poland and of its Germanization. While it is true that its relationship with the Staatliche Bildstelle photograph campaign was rather indirect (between 1941 and 1943 the Institute for German Labor in the East simply took possession of the photographs of Poland and held them until the end of the war), the article by Arend broadens our contextual horizon and draws our attention to the significant political role the Nazi regime attributed to art historians at the time.

In summary, the reviewed book is a solid study of a seemingly trivial episode, which in fact is a characteristic case of how historical sciences were used in the service of the Nazi regime. The Staatliche Bildstelle photograph campaign in the approach proposed by Wojciech Walanus may be interesting not only for art historians, but also for researchers of German cultural policy in occupied Poland, particularly in relation to local heritage.

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(transl. by Ian Stephenson)

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