

CATALOGUES OF ENGRAVINGS – ITALIAN FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN WROCŁAW AND FRENCH FROM THE NATIONAL MUSEUM IN SZCZECIN

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Abstract: The turn of 2017 (the date 2017 is printed in the colophon) marked the publication of two catalogues of engraving collections: old Italian graphic works from the National Museum in Wrocław and French prints from the National Museum in Szczecin.

The Wrocław collection contains sets of works by the best Italian engravers from the Renaissance to the eighteenth century, and a small representation of nineteenth-century art. The introduction describes the history and resources of the collection and a brief history of graphic art on the Apennine Peninsula. The catalogue glosses refer to the current state of research and are preceded by encyclopaedic biographical notes. This well-illustrated and thoroughly edited catalogue arranged in convenient alphabetical order is a compendium useful not only for art historians.

The title of the Szczecin publication is the same as that of the exposition of French graphic art from the collections of the National Museum in Szczecin – a combination of the features of an exhibition and a collection catalogue. Hence its specific layout, corresponding more to exhibition narration than

catalogue criteria. Both the encyclopaedic profiles of artists and the following glosses are accompanied by an abbreviated bibliography; its full version, together with an extensive research apparatus, can be found at the end of the volume. The collection of over 600 engravings has been divided not in alphabetical or chronological order but in accordance with an academic hierarchy of subjects. In the Szczecin collection reproductions of engravings dominate auteur graphic art although works of famous artists are also included.

The publication of both catalogues considerably widens knowledge about graphic art in Polish public collections, i.e. the national museums in Szczecin and Wrocław. It also presents the history of Polish collections after 1945, in the wake of losses suffered at the time of World War II. The publication of the Italian graphic art collection in Wrocław, transferred from the Academy of Arts in Berlin, is an unquestioned sign of the times and the presence of Poland in a united Europe. The layout of both catalogues is extremely meticulous, although illustrations in the French engravings catalogue could have benefitted from a somewhat larger format.

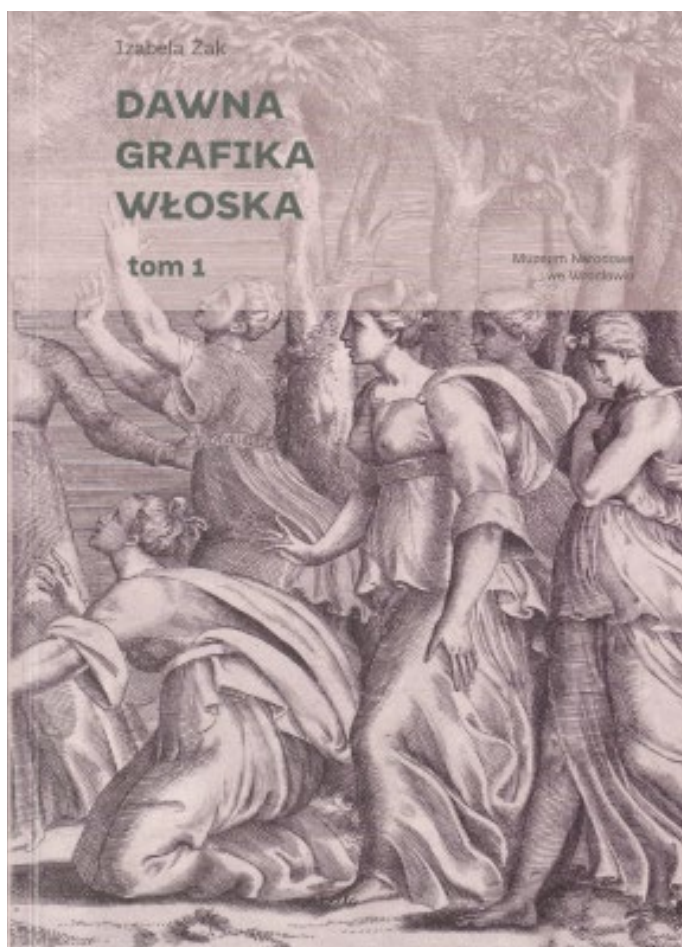
Keywords: French engravings, Italian engravings, National Museum in Szczecin, National Museum in Wrocław, catalogues of collections.

Two catalogues of engraving collections: Old Italian graphic works from the National Museum in Wrocław and French graphic art from the National Museum in Szczecin, were published at the turn of 2017 (with the date 2017 printed in the colophon). Both coincided with an exhibition of Italian School engravings in Wrocław and of French works in Szczecin (supplemented with engravings from the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw). The catalogues make a considerable contribution to the publication of cabinets of drawings collections in Polish public resources. Some have been already printed, such as catalogues of works from the Cabinet of Drawings at the Science Library of the Polish Academy of Learning and the Polish Academy of Sciences in Cracow (*Szkoła niderlandzka XVI, XVII i XVIII w., 1991*, *Rembrandt i konkurenci, 2006*), the National Museum in Gdańsk (*Kolekcja Jakoba Kabruna. Ryciny Szkoły niemieckiej od końca XV do początku XIX, 2009*), the Cabinet of Drawings at the Library of the University of Warsaw (*Katalog kolekcji Henryka Grohmana w Gabinetzie Rycin BUW. Part. 1. Ryciny i rysunki francuskie XIX-XX wieku, 1989*, *Między teorią a praktyką. Rysunek włoski XVI wieku ze zbiorów Gabinetu Rycin Biblioteki Uniwersyteckiej w Warszawie, 2007*), and the National Library in Warsaw (*Rysunki z wilanowskiej kolekcji Potockich w zbiorach Biblioteki Narodowej, 1997*, *Katalog portretów osobistości polskich i obcych w Polsce działających, 1992*). Certain exhibition catalogues, e.g. *Rembrandt. Rysunki*

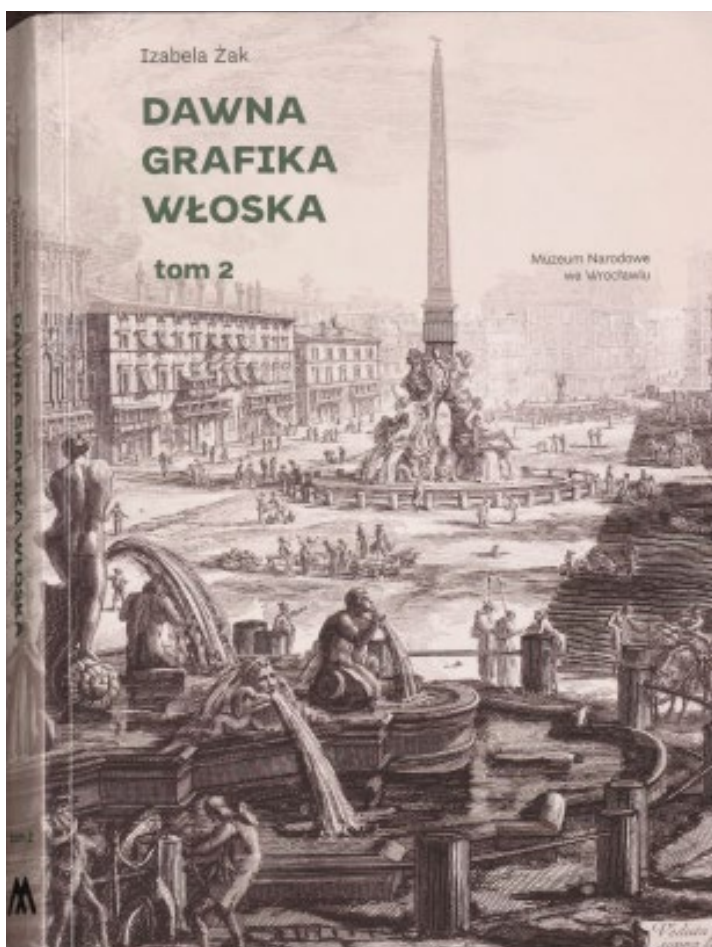
i ryciny w zbiorach polskich, 2009 or: *Francesco Bartolozzi. Ryciny ze zbiorów graficznych Biblioteki PAN w Krakowie, 1995*, can be treated as collection catalogues.

A feature shared by the two titular collections – graphic works from Szczecin and Wrocław, whose catalogues have just been printed – is the fact that as a consequence of wartime and post-war events each contains merely remnants of past historical collections associated with public collections in both towns.

The catalogue of Italian graphic art written by Izabella Żak – which appeared in the wake of a catalogue of French graphic art in the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw, published in 1998 – encompasses 1332 engravings, whose majority do not, however, originate from the collections of former Schlesische Museum der bildende Künste; due to wartime turbulence they were transferred from Silesian repositories to the National Museum in Warsaw. A considerable number came additionally from the collections of the Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin and Kupfestichsammlungen des Königlische Museen, also in Berlin. This collection, obtained in 1978 through the intermediary of the State Archive in Poznań, includes entire sets of works by the most outstanding Italian engravers spanning from the Renaissance: Nicolas Beatrizet, Giulio Bonasone, Marco Dente, Agostino Veneziano, Marcantonio Raimondi, to the seventeenth



1. Giulio Bonasone, *Hercules stealing the cattle of Geryon*, ca 1555–1560, fragment, cover of the 1st volume: Izabella Żak, *Grafika włoska w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 2017, Cat. No. 148



2. Giovanni Batista Piranesi, *Veduta di Piazza Navona sopra le rovine del Circo Agonale* 1773, fragment, cover of the 2nd volume: Izabela Żak, *Grafika włoska w zbiorach Muzeum Narodowego we Wrocławiu*, Wrocław 2017, Cat. No. 916

century: Jacques Callot and Stefano della Bella, Agostino Carracci and Carlo Cesi, associated with Carracci, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli, Pietro Testa and Salvator Rosa. A vast collection of eighteenth-century graphic art contains mainly works by Venetian engravers: Marco Ricci, Giovanni Marco Pitteri, and Giuseppe Wagner as well as Roman artists: Giovanni Battista Piranesi, Luigi Rossini, Giuseppe Vasi or Giovanni Volpato, and Francesco Bartolozzi from Florence, active also in England. The nineteenth century is the least represented in the catalogue of the Wrocław collection: 100 engravings and 50 engravers. Considering that this collection does not paint a complete picture of the history of modern Italian graphic art, since it includes large sets of works by select artists while simultaneously omitting others, its value lies in the fact that apart from an introduction describing the history and resources of the collection the author added a brief outline of the history of graphic art on the Apennine Peninsula. In doing so, she concisely described graphic techniques and their development in particular centres: copperplate engravings in Rome at the time of Raphael and his successors, and etchings in the oeuvre of Parmigianino. Moreover, she contrasted the painterly qualities of chiaroscuro applied in Venice and North Italy. Emphasis was placed on interest in antiquity typical for Rome both during the Renaissance and among the vedutisti of the eighteenth century. Facts

known to specialists render the catalogue a valuable source of knowledge for lovers of graphic art of the past. The advanced state of studies on the above-mentioned artists is the reason why in her succinct presentations the author could refer to known publications, both older and more recent, preceded by a brief encyclopaedic biographical note. The carefully edited and well-illustrated catalogue of Italian graphic art, arranged in alphabetical order and thus easy to follow, is a compendium of great use not solely for historians of art.

“From the soaring spirit to the light of the intellect” – this title of an exhibition of French graphic art from the collections of the National Museum in Szczecin is also the title of a catalogue (*Od wzlotów ducha po światło rozumu*) whose specific form is presumably the outcome of a compromise between the rather irreconcilable criteria of exhibition and collection catalogues. Hence probably its specific configuration corresponding to the narration of the exhibition and resembling more a publication accompanying an exhibition than a collection catalogue. The catalogue as such can be described as erudite, both as regards glosses and biographical notes about the artists, preceding the former and outfitted with a bibliography in the form of abbreviations, whose elaboration is to be found amidst the expanded scientific apparatus at the end of the copious volume. A detailed description of each engraving and an

explanation of its meaning and symbolism are the result more of the expectations of the exhibition visitors and are intended rather for a different sort of recipient than the one who reaches for a collection catalogue.

It follows from the extensive and detailed introduction by Ewa Gwiazdowska that the current collection at the National Museum in Szczecin, totalling 617 works by French engravers or artists connected with France (e.g. the brilliant Italian engraver Nicolas Beatrice or Gérard Edelinck), is not, unfortunately, identical with historical resources dispersed during World War II and post-war years. The resources in question, dating back to the collections of the Szczecin merchant Heinrich Stolting (1814–1884), which included also Old French graphic art (366 items), were enhanced after 1884, i.e. during the era of Kupferstich-Sammlung des Stadt Stettin. As time passed, the Municipal Museum, established in 1913, received works by artists working in the second half of the nineteenth century and contemporary authors. Unfortunately, the entire collection – Stolting, Cabinet of the Town of Szczecin (1884–1912), and the Municipal Museum in Szczecin (from 1913) – did not survive the Second World War or the post-war period; hence the present-day state of the Cabinet of Drawings and the object of the discussed publication are composed of additions of unknown provenance and successive purchases made by the Museum of Western Pomerania, and from 1970 – by the National Museum in Szczecin, in which the graphic art collection is a component of the Collections of Old Art. All those factors possibly influenced the discussed publication, which does not present the collection of French graphic art either in alphabetical order, as was the case in the Stolting catalogue, or chronologically within the range of each school, as in the catalogue of the Drawing Cabinet of the Town Museum in Szczecin, but in an arrangement corresponding to the academic hierarchy of themes resulting, as has been mentioned above, from the configuration of the “From the soaring spirit to the light of the intellect” exhibition and its division into the following categories: *stories (allegory and emblematics, mythology, religion, historical scenes, literary illustrations), portrait, genre scenes, characters, caricatures, landscape, architecture, still life, and cartography, which evades this classification, as well as scientific illustrations*, dictated by the character of the collection. Not always does narration prepared with visitors in mind make things easier for readers because it requires not only patience but also certain prior preparation. It is possible to find authors thanks to the methodically arranged index, in which the name of the artists, whose graphic works are included in the Szczecin collection, have been distinguished for the convenience of visitors. The division of engravings according to the hierarchy of their themes appears to be surprising in view of the fact that they include but a few examples originating from the time of the Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in Paris, where this hierarchy came into being and was obligatory. A considerable part of the engravings are reproductions and illustrations, as in the case of those from *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers* by Diderot and d’Alembert. Reproductions of graphic art dominate over auteur works in the collection of the Museum of



3. Louis Cossin, François Chauveau, member of the Royal Academy, 1668, fragment of a copperplate engraving, cover Ewa Gwiazdowska, *Od wzlotów ducha po światła rozumu. Grafika francuska ze zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Szczecinie*, Szczecin 2017, Cat. No. 160

Szczecin and its catalogue, although it includes exhibits by renowned authors. In the case of the seventeenth century they include: Jean Le Pautre, Daniel Marot, and Bernard Picart; the eighteenth century: Benoît Audran the Elder, Jacques-Philippe Le Bas, Charles-Nicolas Cochin the Elder and the Younger, Gilles Demarteau, Jean-Jacques Flipart, Hubert-François Gravelot, Nicolas de Larmessin II, or Claude-Henri Watelet; the nineteenth century: Nicolas-Toussaint Charlet, Léon Gaucherel, Jean-Jacques Grandville, or Honoré Daumier represented by as many as 40 of his works, albeit in this case the exhibits are copy prints from original lithographic plates.

The publication of both catalogues expands knowledge about the resources of graphic art in Polish public collections – the National Museums in Szczecin and Wrocław. At the same time it portrays the history of Polish collections after 1945, in the aftermath of enormous losses suffered during the Second World War. Without doubt the publication of the Italian graphic art collection, which found itself in Wrocław after being removed from the Academy of Arts in Berlin, is a sign of the times and Poland’s presence in a united Europe.

From the viewpoint of typography both catalogues were printed extremely meticulously. The sole reservation may pertain to the size of reproductions in the Szczecin volume, which only slightly exceed so-called contact sheet images, a fact that, especially in the case of larger engravings, makes more detailed examination difficult. This solution is probably the outcome of the format of the publication,

which, consequently, totals more than 550 pages. In this respect the Wrocław catalogue appears to be much more practical – divided into two large volumes it is easier to use owing to its alphabetical configuration.

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