

Muz., 2023(64): 80-85  
Annual, eISSN 2391-4815

received – 05.2023  
reviewed – 06.2023  
accepted – 06.2023  
DOI: 10.5604/01.3001.0053.7751

# CARL FRIEDRICH SCHULZ'S PAINTING RE-DISCOVERED AT THE MUSEUM OF POST AND TELECOMMUNICATION IN WROCLAW

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Founded on 25 January 1921 in Warsaw, the Museum of Post and Telecommunication (MPiT) was a department museum reporting to the Ministry of Post and Telegraph, forming part of its organizational structure. The foundation of MPiT, and subsequently its dynamic development placed it at the head of Warsaw museums. That period of its prosperity was disrupted by the outbreak of WW II. The Museum was the third in Warsaw, after the National and the Polish Army Museums, to have reopened following the end of the warfare. The Museum still operated for several years following WW II. However, on 21 April 1951, it was closed down apparently for the lack of appropriate premises and lack of display potential. The idea to resume the Museum's activity appeared in March 1955 when a decision was made within the Ministry to reopen the Museum, yet not in Poland's capital. Wrocław was chosen to house it, and the organization of the Museum was assigned to Aleksander Śnieżko (1896–1975) who together with Helena Sztukiel and Czesław Kresła (employees at the Management of the Post and Telecommunication District in Wrocław) ranked among the first Wrocław team of museum curators. Several months later, MPiT in Wrocław was founded, while the gala opening

of the Museum was held on 12 December 1956. The Museum has remained at its first location.<sup>1</sup> By 1999, it had reported directly to the Ministry of Communication, and since then it has been a local-government cultural unit of the Lower Silesian Voivodeship.

One of the numerous parts of the collection amassed by the Museum is a set of paintings related to post. It ranks among one of the smallest collection sets in Poland, as well as the least investigated. Its character is determined by the topics of MPiT's collection.<sup>2</sup> For a hundred years the acquisitions for the Museum collection have been made through donations of private individuals and institutions, as well as Museum's purchases at antique auctions and from private owners. Throughout MPiT's history (in its Warsaw or Wrocław periods) the acquisition procedures differed in relation to the rights assigned to the Museum. In 1921–1951, MPiT could not independently acquire exhibits unless they had a prior Ministry's approval and authorization. Purchases were made with the Ministry as intermediary, and each transaction was entirely financed by it.<sup>3</sup> In the 1930s, acquisitions were additionally assessed by the Museum Council. After the Museum had been transferred to Wrocław, the acquisition

procedures were substantially simplified. It was the Museum staff and management who were authorized to justify the acquisitions. Purchases were thus made independently, in harmony with the principle of individual acquisitions for museum collections by local museums applied in Lower Silesia. Following the above procedures a peculiar Museum collection focused on post-related themes has been created.

In harmony with the above-described principles of acquiring heritage pieces for the Museum collection, MPiT has created a painting collection which never aspired either to be outstanding or grand, and which merely constituted an integral and complementary part of the Museum collection. It, however, boasts works of considerable quality, for instance, by Stanisław Prauss (1902–1967), Jan Rosen (1854–1936), Antoni Suchanek (1901–1982), Karl Hans Taeger (1856–1937), or Mieczysław Wątorski (1903–1979). The set is composed of works by domestic and foreign artists who tackled in their art topics related to post, telegraph, telephone, travelling by mail coach, or who portrayed individuals connected with post.

One of the works in MPiT's collection is an oil painting by an unknown artist from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, featuring the Museum's accession number MPiT/P-III-99, and titled *A Postman*. The painting has been in the Museum collection for several decades, and, interestingly, it has never left the storage; neither has it been displayed to the public (even at displays on the Museum's own premises). Furthermore, it has never been the subject of investigative and cognitive interest of museum curators. It is hard to unequivocally decide today why the painting of high artistic merits, consciously and purposefully purchased for the state Museum collection, was marginalized, and with time even forgotten. The written sources we have had access to do not contain any suggestions. Therefore, the reasons for its falling into oblivion are but hypotheses or guesses. It was 64 years after the painting's purchase, in 2021–2022, that we took interest in the unidentified work, launching its first historical and artistic investigation. Our findings have been shown in the present article.

The exhibit from MPiT's collection was purchased on 7 August 1957 from an antique dealer (the Accession Book Number: XIII-35/852 with a hand-written note on the stretcher: 'Komis 459/57'). It was one of the first purchases made by the Museum after it had been transferred from Warsaw to Wrocław<sup>4</sup> (the Museum's official opening had taken place 16 months earlier, on 12 December 1956<sup>5</sup>). The previous vicissitudes of the painting remain unknown. Owing to the lack of sources neither its previous owners nor the circumstances under which it ended up for sale, or the reasons why the museum curators took interest in it can be identified. There are no Museum records referring to the painting's purchase or its earlier history, while the above-mentioned entries in the Accession Book and the inscription on the stretcher are the only sources of information on how the exhibit was acquired for the Museum collection.

For all these reasons it is hard to respond to the next intriguing question related to the potential reasons for the painting's purchase for the Museum collection. All we can do in our considerations is to formulate generalized guesses and to ponder over the actual reasons for such a purchase. Let us bear in mind that the purchase's justification was left to the Museum curators' team (with no historian or an art historian

among them), without being obliged to resort to outside expertise. Therefore, there could have been numerous reasons for the purchase. Apart from the argumentation which highly likely was not taken into consideration at all, thus the work's unique character, peculiar artistic and/or historical qualities, the exceptional character of the exhibit as seen against painting collections either in Poland or in the region, an outstanding and sought after artist, complementing of the artist's existing collection in the Museum (this is the only work by the artist in MPiT's collection, and, to our knowledge, the only one in Polish museum collections), or its peculiarity, the reasons left are but very down-to-earth.

Thus, why was the work purchased? Undoubtedly, one of the reasons was the Museum curators' search for exhibits for the newly-established Museum in Wrocław. New acquisitions, particularly a purchase, could demonstrate the team's activeness. Additionally, the painting's price was really reasonable and affordable: it was bought for 500 zlotys, not a lot at the time (in 1957, the average monthly pay in Poland stood at 1,279 zlotys).<sup>6</sup> Euphoric that a new institution had been created in Wrocław, in 1956–1960, post offices, particularly from Lower Silesia, generously donated different items to it. The goal at the time was to demonstrate the 'century-long Polishness' of Wrocław and Lower Silesia, as well as to justify the transfer of the Warsaw Museum to this region (it was the only such case of a transfer of a museum from Poland's capital). Such must have been the atmosphere in which it was decided that the Warsaw Museum would be reopened and located in the 'Regained Territories'. And such was most likely the propaganda burden with which the Museum had to operate in Wrocław, at least in the first years following its transfer.

It can also be supposed that another reason for which the painting was bought was to be found in its evocative content. The painting shows an old trip, namely one of the motifs for which MPiT's exhibits are amassed. A later far-reaching interpretation of the work made the Museum curators of the time title the painting *A Postman*. As demonstrated below, the given title is erroneous. On the day of the painting's purchase the Museum collection boasted many other specimens of prints and paintings with the motif of a travel and a postman, if only to name the woodcuts which come the closest to the discussed work by Stanisław Masłowski (1870) or Julia Krajewska (1885).

A rectangular canvas 49.8 x 64.3 cm features an embankment with a street and buildings on a rainy day. The central element in the foreground is a figure of a horseman. Wearing a dark coat and a hat, he is riding towards the beholder along a paved street full of puddles. Behind the rider and to his left there are several-storeyed urban buildings. At the back scarce passers-by huddled and soaked can be seen. Behind the rider a tree painted on the canal bank divides the painting into the land and water zones. In the water zone, just by the canal bank, a boat with its prow facing the beholder is anchored. Further back into the canal a wooden bridge and empty port cranes are visible. Within the land zone the central reference point is the figure of the rider. Horizontally, almost half of the painting is taken by the sky covered with billowing clouds, among which a small section of blue looms creating the atmosphere of unrest. In the bottom right corner of the canvas the artist's signature 'Carl Schulz' can be read on a beam placed on the ground.



1. Carl Friedrich Schulz, oil, canvas, late 1840s/early 1850s



2. Fragment of Carl Friedrich Schulz's painting

Following a thorough visual analysis of the work our doubts can be raised as for the painting's description in the Museum documentation which also had an impact on its title. The central figure in the painting does not show any features of a postman. Both the man's attire and lack of any distinguishing attributes make the beholder free to interpret the figure's profession. Neither is there any element potentially making reference to post institutions in the buildings surrounding the rider.

The above preliminary analysis of the painting allowed the scholars to question its title: *A Postman*. The genuine title of the work was not placed on the canvas's verso, the stretcher, or the frame either by the painter himself or the dealer selling it. It can be, thus, assumed that the anonymous work on the day of the purchase was given the symptomatic title either at the Museum, or it featured in the sale offer, thus, without any verification or basic analysis the work was entered in the Museum register under the name with which it was bought. As a matter of fact, the painting's topic can be more precisely defined as a landscape or a landscape with marine touches. Particularly the latter category remains in harmony with Carl Schulz's interests. Currently, the painting continues without an unquestionably identified title. A preliminary search for the



3. Painting's fragment with the artist's signature

work through the available lists or catalogues of exhibitions of painting and art in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries which could have potentially displayed the oeuvre of Carl F. Schulz has not yielded any results. Therefore, the identification of the title of the artwork in question requires further research.

It has been found that the work was painted by Carl Friedrich Schulz (1796–1866), a German landscapist, portraitist, and marine artist. The unclear signature 'Carl Schulz' left in the painting inspired our comparative analysis which succeeded in unequivocally confirming the work's attribution. Schulz signed his works in several ways. The so-far identified signatures found and identified in his paintings include the following: CS,<sup>7</sup> Carl Schulz,<sup>8</sup> Schulz,<sup>9</sup> C. Schulz,<sup>10</sup> C.F. Schulz.<sup>11</sup> Regrettably, no scholar has attempted at making a chronological list of the signatures used by the artist. Such a list would most likely allow to identify more precisely the period within which the discussed painting could be placed. The 'Carl Schulz' signature in the works analysed comparatively often features the date when the work was created. The signatures used for comparison and identification of the discussed painting can be found on the following works: e.g., *Life-Guard Lancer Regiment on Manoeuvres* from 1848 (sold by the Russian dealer Andre Ruzhnikov),<sup>12</sup> *Ein wohlverdientes Mahl in den Feldern* (auctioned at Sotheby's from a private collection),<sup>13</sup> and *Wilddiebe* (from the collection of the Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin).<sup>14</sup> The painting's attribution was also confirmed by a comparative analysis with other Schulz's known works mentioned in the present paper, and by correspondence with Carola Zimmermann, a scholar of the Museum Neuruppin who confirmed the attribution of the work from the Museum of Post and Telecommunication to Schulz.<sup>15</sup>



4. Carl Friedrich Schulz's painting's verso with the genuine stretcher and frame

All photos are from Museum of Post and Telecommunication in Wrocław.

Also known as Jagdschulz, Carl Friedrich Schulz is a German painter born on 2 November 1796 in the small town of Selchow, south of Berlin. He learnt how to paint at the Düsseldorf School of Painting and the Berlin Academy. In 1821, he travelled to France, the Netherlands, and England. When in Holland, commissioned by the Berlin Gallery, he copied paintings of Jan van Eyck, which with time had an impact on his own painting manner. It was also there that he took interest in seascapes. At an exhibition at the Berlin Academy in 1830 his first presentation of the *Wilddieben im Wald* was displayed, securing him a strong position within the painters' circle.<sup>16</sup> His paintings related to hunting were highly popular, hence the 'Jagdschulz' nickname. In 1840, he became professor at the Berlin Academy.<sup>17</sup> As specially commissioned by Friedrich Wilhelm III, in 1837–1840, he studied costumes and uniforms from the times of Friedrich II. The result of that investigation can be found in a number of watercolours showing Prussian army soldiers. Having moved to Neuruppin in 1848, he died there on 3 March 1866.<sup>18</sup> Carl Friedrich Schulz's painting manner stemmed from the academic tradition of Flemish painting. His works are characterized by a splendid composition and faithful rendering of numerous landscape details. No monograph on Schulz's life and oeuvre has as yet been released.

What still remains unconfirmed is the dating of the painting kept at MPiT. It constitutes a major element in provenance studies, complementing the knowledge of Schulz's oeuvre. An approximate period when the painting, previously not described and studied either historically or artistically, was executed has been identified. On the canvas the artist left only his author's signature, without any date. Meanwhile, in the Museum documentation the period when the painting was executed was defined vaguely as 'the 19<sup>th</sup> century'.<sup>19</sup> A comparative analysis of the painting with other Schulz's works, e.g., those mentioned above, was used to identify the work's approximate dating. It was decided that the painting could have been executed in the late 1840s or early 1850s. Several events suggest this very period. Before 1846 Schulz had used a different painting style, often depicting other than seascape motifs. Two years later the artist retired, and moved to Neuruppin where he continued his passion for painting, and where numerous attractive paintings in the style highly resembling that of the work in question were created. They were works of applied art (decorative paintings) in which the artist focused on landscapes characteristically imitating Dutch painting, remaining faithful to this trend until his death.

To sum up the above, it can be stated that the purpose of our studies has been fulfilled yielding a substantial success. As a result, the analyses have identified a detailed content of the painting, its attribution, and dating. The goal of the present paper was to present the first results of the attempts to identify the provenance and attribution of an anonymous oil painting in the collection of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication in Wrocław. The paper's topic, providing a case study, reminds us that basic museum research has to be conducted. The interest in the Museum collection and the aspiration to most precisely describe an exhibit encouraged Museum curators to perform first attempts at identifying the exhibit's history, its author, the painting motif, and other circumstances of its mysterious vicissitudes. The research problem undertaken by the Authors is relevant not only in view of museology, but also art history. Its solving allows not only the correct inventorying of the exhibit, its diligent and professional identification, dating, and description, but it also contributes to the knowledge of 19<sup>th</sup>-century European painting on the example of the previously unknown source, namely the discussed painting by Carl Friedrich Schulz.

**Abstract:** The story of a painting by Carl Friedrich Schulz (1796–1866) from the collection of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication in Wrocław is discussed. The work has not as yet been presented to the public; neither has it been the object of researchers' interest. Until the moment when this paper was written it had remained unstudied as

for its provenance and had not featured in any catalogue of artworks of Polish artistic collections. The paper is thus the first presentation of Schulz's painting being the result of the investigation of Museum's curators aiming at identifying the provenance and attribution of the previously unknown work.

**Keywords:** Carl Friedrich Schulz, landscape painting, German painting, museum collection, national heritage, Wrocław.

#### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> More on the history of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication see T. Suma, 'Muzeum Poczty i Telekomunikacji – sto lat tradycji', *Rocznik Muzealny*, 8 (2021), 11–28; idem, *Muzeum Poczty i Telekomunikacji we Wrocławiu 1921–2021*, Wrocław 2021, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> See Collection of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication ACNO: MPiT/P-VI-958, item 1; Archives of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication (below: AMPiT), ACNO 1/108, pp. 1–3; AMPiT, ACNO 1/25, pp. 100–101.

- <sup>3</sup> See T. Suma, 'Mecenat Ministerstwa Poczty i Telegrafów nad Muzeum Poczty i Telekomunikacji w Warszawie w latach 1921-1939', *Muzealnictwo*, 61 (2020), pp. 2-9.
- <sup>4</sup> The Museum was opened in Wrocław upon the Order of the Minister of Communication No. 100 of 4 Feb 1956 on the establishment of the Museum of Post and Telecommunication in Wrocław. AMPiT, ACNO 1/25, pp. 100-101. The Minister's Order was issued in harmony with the Resolution of the Government Presidium No. 75/56 of 4 Feb 1956.
- <sup>5</sup> *Łączność*, 29 (1956); *Życie Warszawy*, 186 (1956); *Słowo Polskie*, 152 (1956), 278 (1956), 546 (1956); *Gazeta Robotnicza*, 167 (1956); *Wiadomości – Les Nouvelles. Paris*, 38 (1956); *Gazeta Krakowska* 1957, no. 55.
- <sup>6</sup> The painting's price was written down on the stretcher.
- <sup>7</sup> See <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/carl-friedrich-schulz-rest-after-the-manoeuvre-165-c-4f141bbb68> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>8</sup> See <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/carl-friedrich-schulz-german-1796-1866-young-boy--69071-c-6c042d4a33> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021); <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/schulz-carl-friedrich-idyllische-winterlandschaft-6150-c-a272b27c93> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>9</sup> See <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/carl-friedrich-schulz-german-1796-1866-a-winter-h-126-c-1ad4da8a5e#> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>10</sup> See <https://www.invaluable.com/auction-lot/carl-f-schulz-1796-1866-hunting-party-c-1850-104-c-e87471eafa> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>11</sup> The painting transported to the Museum Neuruppin. Correspondence dated 2 Dec 2021 with Carola Zimmermann (Museum Neuruppin).
- <sup>12</sup> See <https://www.ruzhnikov.com/sold/life-guard-lancer-regiment-on-manoeuvres/> (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>13</sup> See [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl\\_Friedrich\\_Schulz\\_-\\_Ein\\_wohlverdientes\\_Mahl\\_in\\_den\\_Feldern.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Carl_Friedrich_Schulz_-_Ein_wohlverdientes_Mahl_in_den_Feldern.jpg) (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021); <http://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2007/an-important-private-collection-from-hanover-am1020/lot.149.html> (Accessed: 20 Dec 2021).
- <sup>14</sup> See [http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t2.collection\\_lightbox.\\$TspTitleLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=2&sp=3&sp=Slightbox\\_3x4&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=5](http://www.smb-digital.de/eMuseumPlus?service=direct/1/ResultLightboxView/result.t2.collection_lightbox.$TspTitleLink.link&sp=10&sp=Scollection&sp=SfieldValue&sp=0&sp=2&sp=3&sp=Slightbox_3x4&sp=0&sp=Sdetail&sp=0&sp=F&sp=T&sp=5) (Accessed: 21 Dec 2021).
- <sup>15</sup> Correspondence of 2 Dec 2021 with Carola Zimmermann (Museum Neuruppin).
- <sup>16</sup> G. Lammel, *Zwischen Legende und Wahrheit – Bilderfolgen zur brandenburgisch-preussischen Geschichte*, Münster 1997, p. 103.
- <sup>17</sup> *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler*, vol. 30, ed. by H. Vollmer, Leipzig 1936, p. 332.
- <sup>18</sup> A. Rosenberg, *Die Berliner Malerschule, 1819-1879. Studien und Kritiken*, Berlin 1879, pp. 288-289.
- <sup>19</sup> See MPiT's Inventory Book; Museum exhibit card MPiT/P-III-99.

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**Word count:** 1 897; **Tables:** –; **Figures:** 4; **References:** 22

**Received:** 05.2023; **Reviewed:** 06.2023; **Accepted:** 06.2023; **Published:** 08.2023

**DOI:** 10.5604/01.3001.0053.7751

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**Competing interests:** Authors have declared that no competing interest exists.

Article translated by: Magdalena Iwińska

**Cite this article as:** Suma T., Matyschok-Nyckowska A.; A.; CARL FRIEDRICH SCHULZ'S PAINTING RE-DISCOVERED AT THE MUSEUM OF POST AND TELECOMMUNICATION IN WROCLAW. *Muz.*, 2023(64): 80-85

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