

Werte zahlreicher „fremder“, d. h. deutsch konnotierter Kunstwerke erreicht und deren Zerstörung verhindert werden. Ebenso wichtig war die Hinterfragung früherer Forschungsthesen, darunter jener der deutschen „Ostforschung“, die in der Zwischenkriegszeit die Kunst des „deutschen Ostens“ nationalistisch vereinnahmt hatte. Ein weiterer wesentlicher Effekt jener Hinwendung zur Form war eine generelle Änderung der methodologischen Herangehensweisen in der polnischen Kunstgeschichtsschreibung – Piotr Korduba zeigte dies am Beispiel Danzigs.<sup>29</sup> Durch ihre „Entdeutschung“ konnte die Kunst der Nord- und Westgebiete in den Diskurs über die Kunst in Polen einbezogen und in der Folge auch im internationalen Zusammenhang wahrgenommen werden. Für die polnische Kunstgeschichtsschreibung wurde die Fokussierung auf die Form also zu einem Neubeginn (*Reset*), der den Weg für weitere Forschungsfragen und methodologische Ansätze ebnete, die letzten Endes auch die nationalistisch gefärbten Thesen beider Seiten im ideologischen Streit über die Kunst der „verlorenen“ resp. „wiedergewonnenen“ Gebiete widerlegten. Heutzutage kann diese Geschichte möglicherweise inspirierend wirken, da sie zeigt, wie Kunstgeschichtsschreibung auch unter ideologischem Druck bestehen kann.

## SUMMARY

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ESCAPE INTO FORM AS ONE OF THE STRATEGIES OF POLISH ART HISTORY ON THE FORMER GERMAN TERRITORIES AFTER 1945

Among the most important problems of Polish art history after 1945 was its attitude towards art on the so-called Western Territories. Following an unprecedented shift of the country's borders, Polish art history was faced with an unusual challenge – of dealing with the artistic heritage of these areas. The problem was additionally exacerbated by the social and mental consequences of the Second World War. The brutal policy of exterminating everything that was Polish, conducted by the Third Reich, resulted in strong anti-German feelings, fuelled by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic. Fairly widespread was also a belief, propagated by the authorities, about a return to the old, early-Slavic territories, which helped the new inhabitants of the area to get better assimilated. Another problem was the policy of radical modernisation carried out by the authorities of the Polish People's Republic, which found expression, among other things, in eliminating any visual traces of the gentry culture and religiosity on the area. Equally disturbing was the confessional foreignness of Protestant churches. It was against such a framework that Polish art historians, also heavily burdened by the war and German occupation, worked. It would be easy in this situation to employ the so-called 'Kaliningrad [Königsberg] solution', that is, pretending that the extant heritage was never there, and replacing it with a brand new cultural landscape. That, however, did not happen. Even though some steps had been taken to change the meaning of numerous works of art, Polish art historians mostly contributed to a clear change of direction in research towards investigating formal aspects of works of art. Such an approach helped them to steer clear of nationalist reefs, that is, to escape the propaganda. Obviously, it required using a specific language and underscoring foreign (e.g. Netherlandish) influences or proposing attributions that connected artworks on the Western Territories with objects existing on the historic areas of Poland. Thanks to a turn towards formal analysis, the discourse was moved into the domain of the language of art history that did not easily succumb to propaganda and that allowed to establish a conviction about genuine artistic value of numerous 'foreign' artworks, a conclusion that led to their protection. Because, for instance, in analyses of the forms of vaultings or of the pattern of plasterwork decorations, questions of nationality had to give way to discussing artistic values, the composition or the novelty of devices used. Equally important was a response to the claims of German art historians who tried to mark the art of the area with a national taint (especially W. Drost, H. Bethe and G. Grundmann in the 1930s). Formal analysis was, then, a sort of a new beginning, a way of clearing up the field for future discussions, which eventually resulted in the blooming of Polish art history.

<sup>29</sup> P. KORDUBA, *Visionen des alten Danzig in polnischen kunsthistorischen Publikationen*, S. 101 (wie Anm. 1).