## (Re)Constructing the Archive: A Collection of **Reproductions in Poznań**

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SAŽETAK

Fotoarhiv Instituta za povijest umjetnosti na Sveučilištu The photo archive at the Institute of Art History at the Adam Adam Mickiewicz (The Institute of Art History, Adam Mic- Mickiewicz University (AMU) in Poznań is over 120 years kiewicz University, AMU) u Poznanju star je više od 120 go- old. Forgotten for many decades, the oldest 10,000 glass dina. Premda su desetljećima bili zaboravljeni, najstarijih 10 slides and photographic reproductions have survived to this 000 staklenih dijapozitiva i fotografskih reprodukcija preži- day. In the last few years, however, they have been cleaned vjelo je do danas. U posljednjih su nekoliko godina očišćeni and become part of a new research unit, the Audiovisual i uvršteni u novu istraživačku jedinicu – Audiovizualni arhiv Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies. The Poznań na fakultetu Faculty of Art Studies AMU-a. Arhiv fotografi- photo archive was inextricably linked to different Poznań ja u Poznanju bio je povezan s različitim sveučilištima u universities, which, due to historical and political reasons, Poznanju kojima su, zbog povijesnih i političkih razloga, u were in the past one hundred years administered by either proteklih stotinu godina upravljali Poljaci ili Nijemci. Kada je Poles or Germans. When the photo archive was inventoried fotoarhiv iznova inventariziran, u obzir su uzete povijesne anew, the historical collections of different institutions were zbirke različitih institucija, odnosno zbirke su organizirane taken into consideration, i.e., collections were organized prema njihovoj povijesnoj pripadnosti njemačkim ili polj- according to their historical affiliation to German or Polish skim sveučilištima u Poznanju. Poznań universities.

### KLJUČNE RIJEČI

fotoarhivi, fotografski arhivi na sveučilištima, photo archives, photographic archives at universities, fotografske knjižnice, arhiv Instituta za povijest umjetnosti photo libraries, the Institute of Art History Photo Archive na Sveučilištu Adam Mickiewicz u Poznanju at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań

# (Re)konstruiranje arhiva: zbirka reprodukcija u Poznanju

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## ABSTRACT

## **KEYWORDS**



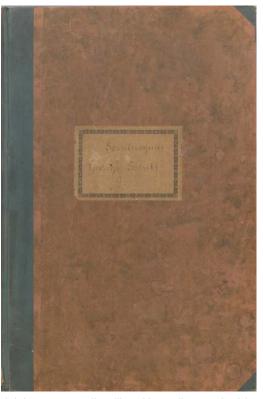
Research on photo archives conducted in the past years has not only led to the development of knowledge and research methodology for photographic collections<sup>1</sup> but has also raised awareness of the importance of archives and the need to preserve them. As a result, previously unknown, forgotten, or hidden collections were "discovered". The discovery of sometimes quite substantial photographic collections raises many questions and doubts as to their organization and archiving. How to organize a photographic collection that has never been inventoried? What to do with a photographic collection whose inventory list has been destroyed or has survived in a residual form? Should the archivist organize a collection according to the rules and systems that governed it years ago when it was originally created? Or can the archivist propose a new system, disregarding traditional methods?

Precisely such questions were raised in the Audiovisual Archive at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, a research unit that was established in 2020, among others, to archive and preserve the collection of graphics and photographs which belongs to the AMU Institute of Art History. The photo archive of the Poznań Institute of Art History was officially established in 1975; it mainly stored 35 mm slides used by academics during classes and in their research. The digital revolution questioned its raison d'etre, and the collection fell into oblivion. Respectively, old, dirty, and disordered photographs (prints and glass slides), sitting unused since the 1970s, were "discovered" in the photo archive. The faculty authorities decided that the former photographic collections and the archives of the Institute of Art History (historical archives and the legacy of its employees) would be transformed into the Audiovisual Archive.<sup>2</sup>

The present article discusses the archiving and inventorying of the oldest collection of over 10,000 glass slides, photographic and photomechanical prints, and graphics.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PHOTO ARCHIVE AT THE INSTITUTE OF ART HISTORY IN POZNAŃ

The history of the photo archive at the Institute of Art History dates back almost 120 years and is associated with the history of Poznań universities and the teaching of art history.<sup>3</sup> Organizational changes at Poznań universities went hand in hand with political changes, as Poznań was alternately part of Germany and Poland. After the partitions of Poland at the end of the 18th century, Poznań and the region of Wielkopolska became part of the Kingdom of Prussia first and then of the German Empire for over 100 years. Thus, when art history was first introduced as a discipline at the German Royal Academy in Poznań, Poznań was the capital of the Poznań Province at the eastern fringe of the German Empire. In the interwar period, when the city again became part of Poland, Poznań was the capital of the Poznań Voivodeship, the westernmost region of Poland. During World War II, Poznań became the



Sl. / Fig. 1 Inventarna lista dijapozitiva Povijesno-umjetničkog seminara, Sveučilište u Poznanju, 1925. Audiovizualni arhiv Fakulteta umjetničkih studija Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz. / Inventory list of slides from the Art History Seminar at the University of Poznań, 1925. The Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies.

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SI. / Fig. 2 Inventarna lista slajdova Povijesno-umjetničkog seminara, Sveučilište u Poznanju, 1947. Audiovizualni arhiv Fakulteta umjetničkih studija Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz. / Inventory list of slides from the Art History Seminar at the University of Poznań, 1947. The Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies.

Cf., among others, Caraffa, Photo Archives and the Photographic Memory of Art History; Edwards, Raw Histories; Edwards, Morton, Photo-graphs, museums, collections; Caraffa, "The photo archive as laboratory", 37-46; Photo-Objects. On the Materiality of Photographs and Photo Archives in the Humanities and Sciences: in Polish: Manikowska, Kopania, Archiwa wizualne dziedzictwa kulturowego [Visual Archives of Cultural Heritage]; Manikowska, Jamski, Archiwa wizualne dziedzictwa kulturowego [Visual Archives of Cultural Heritage].

The Audiovisual Archive also houses a collection of recordings and documents made during the AMU Institute of Musicology's ethnomusicological tours. The ongoing digitization and inventory work in the Audiovisual Archive is funded as part of the project: Digital Research Infrastructure for the Humanities and Arts DARIAH-PL, funded by the Intelligent Development Operational Programme, Polish National Centre for Research and Development, ID: POIR.04.02.00-00-D006/20. Ultimately, the project will give rise to an online digital repository with three sets of digital data: scans of photographic reproductions, archival documents, and music recordings.

More on the history of the Poznań photo archive: Kłudkiewicz. "The History and the Role", 59-68.

Dettloff, "Seminarium Historii Sztuki" [Art History Seminar], 519. 5

Ibid.

The first group of the oldest reproductions are 5,000 glass slides, which were cleaned and inventoried first. Two inventory lists of these objects have survived. One is from 1925: Letter from Karl Heinz Clasen to Richard Hamann dated January 26, it was the first part of a larger, currently incomplete catalog 1940, the Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies. and lists slides from 1 to 3,940 (Fig. 1). The second inventory Archives of the Institute of Art History, Collection: Kletzl-Photo archive.

capital of the Wartheland, a region directly incorporated into the Third Reich, which, according to the Nazi ideology, was the center of research on Eastern Europe. After 1945, the city became the capital of the new Poznań Voivodeship, which also partially included the so-called Recovered Territories (i.e., the former eastern territories of Germany annexed by communist Poland after the end of World War II).

Structurally, the following Polish and German institutions may be distinguished in the history of teaching art history as an academic discipline in Poznań: the art history seminar at the German Royal Academy (1903-1919); the art history sem inar at the Polish University of Poznań (1919-1939); the Institute of Art History at the Third Reich University (Reichsuniversität Posen, 1939–1945); the Institute of Art History at the Polish Adam Mickiewicz University (1945 to present times).

Each of the aforementioned institutions had a collection of reproductions of works of art; they were made using various techniques. The respective universities came into the possession of the archives of the predecessor, adding them to their collections. The archival sources allow us to estimate the size of the collection in different historical periods. In 1918 (when the Polish University of Poznań took over the collection of the German Royal Academy), the photo archive consisted of 4,000 slides and 4,000 prints.<sup>4</sup> In 1925, the collection consisted of 7,000 slides and 5,000 prints.<sup>5</sup> Further archival information is incomplete. In 1939, German scholars took over "a good collection of slides from German times" (eine gute Diapositivsammlung z. T. noch aus deutscher *Zeit besitzt*)<sup>6</sup> but did not cite precise figures. Attempts to create a catalog after World War II failed. Therefore, it is impossible to establish how many objects did not survive the war. We know that both glass slides and photographs were used until the 1960s. Later, book illustrations became more popular, and since the 1970s, 35mm slides have been predominantly used.

## THE CURRENT STATE OF THE COLLECTION OF THE OLDEST SLIDES AND PRINTS

Currently, the oldest objects in the photo archive are (approx. 5,000) slides and (approx. 5,300) photographs of different sizes glued onto cardboard backings. They are reproductions of works of art purchased from Polish, German and foreign companies specializing in producing and selling reproductions of works of art. Many prints that were not glued onto cardboard backings have also survived. The latter collection, whose origin is not fully reconstructed, is currently not being inventoried or studied.

list is from 1947 and apparently lists slides that survived WWII but ends abruptly at number 1,282 (Fig. 2). The exist ing captions on the slides allow us to match the numbers on the slides to both lists. However, there are more markings, numbers and sometimes dates on the slides, suggesting that more inventory lists were compiled in the history of our collection. In addition, a large proportion of the slides have no markings that could be associated with either inventory list.

Some of the slides which survived to this day were kept in a designated slide cabinet down in the Institute's basement (Fig. 3) and arranged in a geographical (architecture) or an alphabetical (names of painters and sculptors) order. In a word, they were organized following the rules used in photo libraries since the end of the 10th century. However, the order was not consistent. Several drawers were labeled as "to be inventoried", as if the archivist had not really known what to do with them. Some of the slides were kept in portable slide boxes (Fig. 4). Slides were arranged and prepared with a specific lecture on art history, e.g., ancient Greek art or Renaissance architecture in Italy, in mind. Boxes prepared by lecturers, ready to be displayed in a lecture hall at the beginning of the class, were preserved.

As a result, we had two groups of slides:

• slides that were partially arranged in the cabinet, • slides that were prepared for lectures in portable boxes. We photographed the arrangement of both groups in order to keep the existing order. Then, we had to decide how to organize these objects, give them inventory numbers, and finally enter them into a database that would soon be available online.

## INVENTORYING

Inventorying, like any archival procedure, involves appraisal and making a decision as to the status of a given object (both now and in the future, with all its implications). As Terry Cook wrote: "In a very real way, since every archival function requires the archivist to appraise the value, worth, significance, and impact of the proposed action (or inaction) that the ar- History, origin unknown, present condition. chives may take, appraisal is the only archival function — nev-  $\uparrow$ er ending, always opening to new possibilities".<sup>7</sup>

Today, as we know, the archivist is no longer perceived as a passive guardian of the collection entrusted to them by its founder.<sup>8</sup> The archivist is the co-creator, and often the main creator of the archive, who decides to include or exclude certain objects and organizes the archive in a way that best reflects the intentions of the original collector (be it an institution or a private individual).9

Two principles guided the inventory process in the photo archive. First, we were not limited by any coherent historical inventory list that would include most of the preserved objects. Second, the tools offered by digital repositories, above all different search engines, meant that we were no longer required to follow the established rules of archiving



Sl. / Fig. 3 Ormar s dijapozitivima na staklu u podrumu Instituta za povijest umjetnosti Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz, porijeklo nepoznato, današnje stanje. / Cabinet with glass slides in the basement of the AMU Institute of Art



Sl. / Fig. 4 Prijenosna kutija za slajdove pronađena 2020. u jednom od ormara za pohranu na Institutu za povijest umjetnosti Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz, današnje stanje Portable slide box found in 2020 in one of the storage cabinets at the AMU Institute of Art History, present condition



Sl. / Fig. 5 Dijapozitiv na staklu iz kolekcije Kaiser Friedrich muzeja u Poznanju, koju je 1919. nabavilo Sveučilište u Poznanju. Crveno slovo M i datum muzejskog otkupa vidljivi su na slajdu. Audiovizualni arhiv Fakulteta umietničkih studija Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz. / A glass slide from the collection of the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Poznań, acquired in 1919 by the University of Poznań. The red letter M and the date of purchase by the museum are visible on the slide. The Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies.

Cook, "Documenting society and institutions", 3.

More on the changes in the perception of the role of the archivist: Cook, "Documenting society and institutions", 1-30.

Cf. Cook, "Macroappraisal in Theory and Practice", 101-161; Cox, No Innocent Deposits; Craig, Archival Appraisal.

On the collection slides owned by the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Poznań, see Kłudkiewicz, "Zespół szklanych przeźroczy" [Collection of slides], 134-151.

On Ludwig Kaemmerer, cf.: Kłudkiewicz, "Ludwig Kaemmerer (1862-1938)", 399-415.

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reproductions (i.e., works of architecture are organized geographically; paintings and sculptures are organized alphabetically by artist name).

## INVENTORY OF THE COLLECTION OF GLASS SLIDES

The collection of glass slides was the first collection to be inventoried in the Audiovisual Archive. The slides marked with the red letter M stood out in this group. Research on signs and signatures on slides and a query in the archives of the National Museum in Poznań, which acquired the collection from the German Kaiser Friedrich Museum (which was open in Poznań during the times of the German Empire. i.e., from 1904 to 1919), indicated that 1,126 slides from the collection of the Audiovisual Archive once belonged to the local German museum.<sup>10</sup> Both German institutions, the art history seminar at the Royal Academy and the German museum, were connected by Ludwig Kaemmerer, who was the first professor of art history at the Poznań University and at the same time the director of the museum.<sup>11</sup> Presumably, the collection was used during art history lectures at the museum but also during lectures at the Royal Academy. We know that lectures for students had been held at the museum for a couple of years. After 1919, the collection was transferred from the Polish museum (at the time) to the Polish Art History Seminar.

The museum's slide collection has its identifying features: the red letter M or the letters KFM and a red serial number. Some of the slides also bear the date of purchase by the museum and the number under which the item was entered in the museum's inventory book (Fig. 5). Missing numbers indicate that the original collection was slightly larger, amounting to approximately 1,300 slides.

As no information about the slides from the first university collection (the German Royal Academy) has survived, the first confirmed set of slides in the Archive are the slides from the Prussian museum. Having analyzed the marks on the slides, we decided to use the museum's ordering system. The collection of slides was arranged in keeping with the order of the historical collection, as indicated by the preserved sources and the deciphered numerical markings on the objects in question.

The first collection of slides belonged to the German Kaiser-Friedrich-Museum; the second collection dates back to the interwar period (and the Polish University of Poznań); the third is a collection of the Third Reich University; the fourth collection consists of slides without identifying marks and cannot be assigned to any of the existing groups; the fifth group consists of slides arranged for display during lectures (in portable boxes). The latter was most likely purchased by the Polish university after World War II, though there is no conclusive evidence of this. Reconstructing the respective collections is based on research conducted in the AMU archives, the museum, and other local institutions, as well as discovering the meanings of various numbering systems found on the slides.

## INVENTORY OF THE COLLECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTIONS

The second group of the oldest reproductions consists of approximately 5,300 photographs and photomechanical prints. Archiving this group of reproductions was fraught with difficulties. No inventory lists of these objects exist. Moreover, only a small percentage of them have any marks or labels indicating affiliation or owner (about 500 objects out of 5.300. Fig. 6). Unlike the slide collection, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to assign these objects to historical university collections.

They were initially organized in accordance with their size. The only exception is the collection of photographic prints of different sizes (about 400 objects) from the Nazi era. These photographs show historical heritage objects from the Baltic states, the so-called Wartheland (part of Wielkopolska that was directly incorporated into the Third Reich in 1939) and the General Government (an administrative and territorial unit extending over Polish lands, including Warsaw and Krakow, occupied by Germany during World War II but not annexed by the Third Reich). While this collection requires further in-depth research, it can initially be stated that it Audiovizualni arhiv Umjetničkog fakulteta Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz is probably part of the "Archives of Eastern European Art" "Königliche Akademie zu Posen" in the lower right corner of the conceived by Otto Kletzl, professor of art history at the Nazi cardboard backing, photographic print glued onto a cardboard Reich University in Poznań (1941–1945). It was meant to be a collection of slides, photographic prints and films documenting the culture and art of Eastern European countries conquered by Germany (Fig. 7).

### CONCLUSION

Inspired by the findings of Helen Willa Samuels, the author of the famous essay "Who Controls the Past", <sup>13</sup> Joan Schwartz came up with five important postulates for photo archives: I) That context in archives extends beyond the principles of simple provenance and original order; 2) That photographs "function"; 3) That it is critically important to understand the functional context of creation and the documentary universe of circulation of photographs, and indeed all archival materials, as deeply as possible before intelligent action can be taken by the archivist; 4) That central to such action is a commitment to research by the archivist into such context, not as a luxury, but as a necessity, to gain the knowledge crucial to the success of the archival mission; and 5) That greater emphasis on "function" and "functionality" of the sponsorship, creation, technological origins, multiple uses, receptions, and distributions of photographs can shed great light on their nature and role as records rather than focusing primarily on their subject content or the fame of their creator/ Schwartz, "The Archival Garden", 73.



SI. / Fig. 6 Primjerak fotografske reprodukcije umjetničkog djela s pečatom Kralievske akademije u Poznanju u donjem desnom uglu kartonske podloge, na koju je zalijepljen fotografski otisak. / A sample photographic reproduction of a work of art with the stamp backing. The Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies.

Undated rough copy of Otto Kletzel's letter, the Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies, Archives of the Institute of Art History, Collection: Kletzl-Photo archive. On teaching art history at the Third Reich University in Poznań, cf.: Arend, Studien zur deutschen kunsthistorischen "Ostforschung"; Labuda, "Instytut Historii Sztuki na Uniwersytecie Rzeszy w Poznaniu w latach 1941-1945" [Institute of Art History at the Third Reich University in Poznań in 1941-1945], 257-275: Labuda. "Instytut Historii Sztuki na Uniwersytecie Rzeszy w Poznaniu i budowa narodowego socjalizmu" [Institute of Art History at the Third Reich University in Poznań and the rise of national socialism], 257-275. 13

Samuels, "Who Controls the Past", 109-124. 1/

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SI. / Fig. 7 Arhiv Ostlandbild (fotografski studio Waldemara Rodea i Alfreda Kissa koji je djelovao za vrijeme Drugog svjetskog rata u Łódźu), Kapela u Białi, fotografija zalijepljena na kartonsku podlogu. Audiovizualni arhiv Fakulteta umjetničkih studija Sveučilišta Adam Mickiewicz. / Ostlandbild-Archiv (Waldemar Rode and Alfred Kiss's photo studio operating during World War II in Łódź), chapel in Biała, photographic print glued onto a cardboard backing. The Audiovisual Archive at the AMU Faculty of Art Studies.

photographer.<sup>14</sup> Schwartz emphasizes the need to preserve photography's context, not only as regards the context of its origin but also the context of it being part of an archive.

Establishing a new order and assigning inventory numbers to the objects from the collection of the Audiovisual Archive was based on the belief that the key to understanding the specificity and dynamics of the Poznań photo archive is its complicated history. Subsequent owners and guardians, German and Polish art historians who had been active in Poznań for almost a hundred years, determined the nature of the collection, often adding to it objects that were important in Polish and German art history. Therefore, organizing and archiving the objects in keeping with the principles that governed the historical collections, to the greatest degree possible, will not only show their unique nature but also help scholars study them in the future.

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BRINGING DOWN THE "ARCHIVE FEVER"

(RE-)CONSTRUCTING THE ARCHIVE: A COLLECTION OF REPRODUCTIONS IN POZNAŃ