

Dreamers of the Industrial Age.

Painting in Gdańsk in the 19th Century

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2023

exhibition guide





II.1
 Johann Sprot Stoddart (1811–1892), *Drawing of Lots for Paintings*,
 watercolour, black ink and pen on paper, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/1528/R

Exhibitions remembered forever – a short story about 19th-century painting and Gdańsk exhibitions

The less obvious inventions of the 19th century include temporary exhibitions of works of art. Obviously, it was possible to visit private collections even earlier, but it was in this particular century that the idea to gather together many objects in a single place to please an audience became more established, just like the need to popularise art itself. Today, although the standards of the art of arranging exhibitions and the expectations of the audience have changed, the organisers of exhibitions are still faced with similar challenges, i.e. gathering unique objects in one space, while counting on the favourable disposition of the public, whose tastes and sympathies are changeable. The first exhibitions in Gdańsk were connected with the activity of the Royal School of Fine Arts (*Königliche Kunstschule*) – an important centre forming the initial stage of the education of Gdańsk's painters. Some of the artists continued their education in other academic centres – mainly in Königsberg, Berlin, Düsseldorf and Dresden. 1835, however, witnessed the establishment of the Art Association of Gdańsk (*Kunstverein zu Danzig*), which was to organise exhibitions, support artists and promote art. A year later the 'First Great Exhibition of Art' was organised, thus beginning the history of temporary exhibitions in the city. Apart from the presentation of works of artists from many centres, it was also an opportunity for socialising and purchasing new works of art, since some of the paintings were for sale. The exhibitions were accompanied by banquets, concerts, and, later, also lectures and the shows of dance groups. Lotteries were also organised owing to which every member of the Association visiting the exhibition, even a less affluent one, had a chance to become a lucky owner of a work of art (II. 1).

Members of the organisation included city dwellers of different social standings and professions – not only artists and patrons of the arts, although it was they who were responsible for the actual activity and the organisation of exhibitions. In his

painting *Evening Meeting of Painters at Stoddart's in Gdańsk*, Otto Brausewetter (1835–1904) pictured a meeting of members of the Association and the most important figures in its history (II. 2). For the artistic milieu of Gdańsk, the existence of the Association was so important, indeed, that it would be difficult to recall the history of art of the time without mentioning its activity. This applies in particular to painting, since it was mainly paintings which were presented at the exhibitions; painters were also engaged in the activity of the organisation.



II. 2
Otto Brausewetter (1835–1904), *Evening Meeting of Painters at Stoddart's in Gdańsk*,
1862, oil on canvas, inv. no. MNG/SD/763/M

Works of art were exhibited without a division into genres – the main factors taken into account were aesthetic factors and the necessity to include all the works in a rather limited space. Today, showing works by artists who were popular at the time, we may transfer ourselves into the past and imagine the emotions and impressions that accompanied visitors to exhibitions in the 19th century. The latter impressions are expressed in reviews, published in the press from the time of the very first exhibition organised in 1836 and onwards. The Gdańsk journalist and founder of the newspaper *Danziger Dampfboot*, Wilhelm Schumacher (1800–1837), used lofty tones when underlining the importance of the event, which was to bring

II. 3 Johann Sprot Stoddart
(1811–1892),
Miss Zernecke Viewing an Exhibition,
1849, watercolour, black ink and pen on paper,
National Museum in Gdańsk,
inv. no. MNG/SD/1426/R



considerable benefits for the city and 'remain preserved until the furthest times'. He compared the opening of the exhibition to a seed which has been sown and which is going to sprout owing to the activity of the Association, and stated that further exhibitions would bloom like flowers in the crown of the city. 'The first great exhibition of art' was like 'a source of the sun, the rays of which are recognition, invigoration and admiration' (the author developed the above further, writing about the recognition enjoyed by artists, invigoration of the market of art through purchases, and the admiration resulting from the cultural awakening). His further enthusiastic expressions included: 'the awakening, flourishing, light, which opens the eyes'. The reviewer also touched upon the social thread. He lamented the fact that most visitors to the exhibition were affluent 'showy guests' in their new clothes, and commented on the members of the public that were missing – from the middle and the poorest classes (II. 3). The rich, as Schumacher wrote, had their collections and travelled, while the less rich could experience the joy of contact with art for a small fee. Judging from the text, the issue of its availability to the relatively unprosperous audience was important to the founders of the Association. The review ends with a reflection on the divine inspiration behind the works of art. The author compares the exhibition space 'to a house of god that all people with a pure heart and clean clothes may have access to', stressing the divine impact on the creation of works of art, which are not made 'owing to human will or even an order of the world's mightiest, but solely through a supernatural influence, through godly inspiration'.



II. 4

Johann Sprot Stoddart (1811–1892),

Portrait of Louis Sy,

watercolour, black ink and pen on paper,

National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/1475/R

The first exhibition was organised almost 190 years ago, in 1836. Large exhibitions were prepared every two years – in cooperation with associations from other cities, where they were also shown – the inhabitants of Königsberg, Poznań, Wrocław and Gdańsk could see more or less the same sets of works. For the public of Gdańsk, these exhibitions were an opportunity to see works by famous artists without the necessity to travel, while for the local painters, it was a chance to present their works in their home city and other centres. The last large, fortieth exhibition organised by the Association was opened in 1911, closing this chapter of the city's history. The exhibition was arranged by Fritz Pfuhe (1878–1969), an artist who had arrived in Gdańsk shortly before to take over the position of a teacher of painting and drawing in the local Higher Technical School. Gdańsk's artists often tackled the organisation of exhibitions, and later also advertising; before Pfuhe, they were Louis Friedrich Rudolf Sy (1815–1887) (II. 4) and Wilhelm August Stryowski (1834–1917), who were also connected with Gdańsk's museum. It is difficult to separate the history of the City Museum, local painting circles, and the Art Association of Gdańsk, and the effects of the activity of Gdańsk's milieu include a collection of paintings held in the National Museum in Gdańsk, being successively developed until today.

In the course of the 75-year-long history of the Association, not only the place and the organisers but also the fashions and tastes of the public were evolving. What dominated initially was historical painting, views of architecture and landscapes.

The first exhibition displayed almost 900 exhibits, with sculptures, works of decorative arts, models of buildings and Orientalia represented, along with paintings and drawings. It was possible to see at the same time a painted battle scene and a model of a steamship, Chinese chess, embroidered pictures, porcelain with painted views of cities and art of the past – in particular paintings by artists connected with Gdańsk. The art of German artists dominated, but French and Dutch paintings were also shown. Until 1872, exhibitions were presented in Green Gate, and later in the City Museum in Gdańsk. This institution was founded in 1870 and two years later it was opened to the public after a refurbishment. Quoting the press review again, the public could see the paintings, including familiar ones, which the author referred to as 'good friends in a new interior'. The beautifully lit building offered a space which was much better suited for the presentation of

II. 5, 6

Rudolf Theodor Kuhn, Richard Adalbert Ballerstädt,
Former Franciscan Monastery in Gdańsk after Renovation
1873, photograph on paper
National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/GGF/215/FG/1-12





II. 7

Bartholomäus Milwitz (ca. 1590–1656), *View of Gdańsk*,
1620–1625, oil on panel, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/281/M

works of art. A fragment stating that we most like to see what we are well familiar with is certainly interesting. The interior of the former Franciscan monastery soon after the opening of the first exhibition can be seen in the album published by Richard Adalbert Ballerstädt, with photographs by the publisher and Rudolf Theodor Kuhn. The twelve photographs present the exterior of the building of the museum as well as the exhibition halls (II. 5–6).

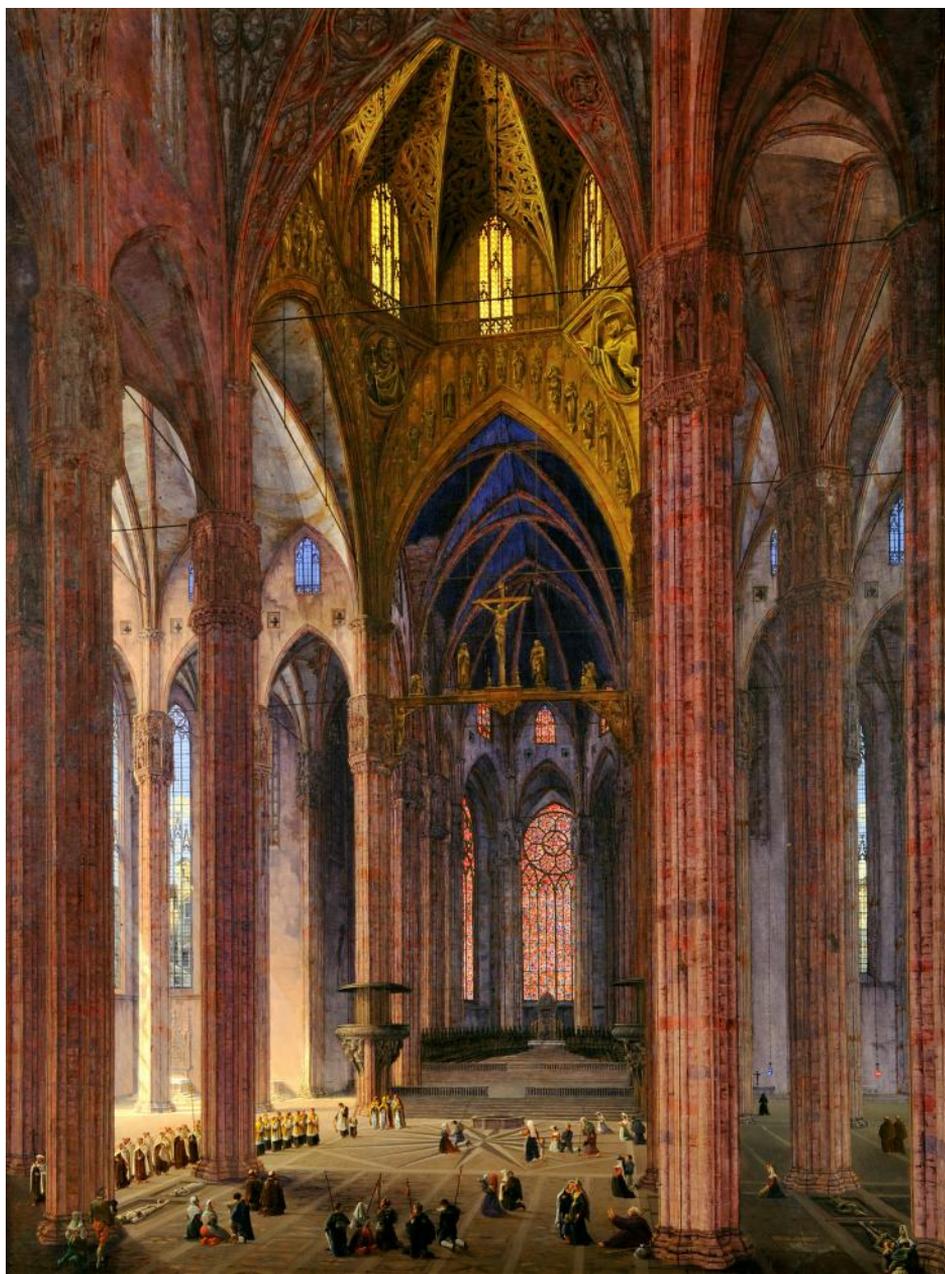
Employees of the museum were also members of the Association responsible for the actual organisation of exhibitions. Initially, the above was dealt with by Louis Friedrich Rudolf Sy, performing the function of the first curator from 1872, and subsequently Wilhelm August Stryowski, who as of 1880 was employed as a conservator, and eight years later also as a curator. Members of the Association also sat on the Board of the Gdańsk's museum, which comes as no surprise, as apart from their joint activity the Association purchased paintings with the thought of the institution in mind since its very establishment, i.e. 35 years before the founding of the museum. Thus, the collection of the Association constitutes the oldest collection of the Gdańsk museum along with that provided by Jacob Kabrun (1759–1814). It contained not only 19th-century but also older art – the first painting bought was Bartholomäus Milwitz's *View of Gdańsk* (II. 7).

The author of the review of the exhibition from December 1872 predicted that the academic painters of the 19th century would enjoy eternal fame and join the Pantheon of masters together with Raphael and Rubens. However, most of the creators of the exhibited works fell into oblivion, and 19th-century famous individuals such as Theodor Hildebrandt or Paul Delaroche are not mentioned in one breath with the most celebrated artists of all times.

The landscape and vedute of late Neoclassicism and the early Biedermeier period

Initially, the displayed paintings were dominated by landscapes and vedute. The earliest works of 19th-century artists presented in the exhibition are the ones painted by Joseph Manskirsch (1768–1830). This painter-landscapist and engraver was born in Ehrenbreitstein, worked inter alia in Cologne and London, and in 1822 arrived in Gdańsk, where he was employed by Johann Adam Breysig in the freshly established Royal Academy of Fine Arts. Manskirsch's paintings were inspired by neoclassicist vedute. His works show his reception of Dutch landscapes in cool winter tones with staffage in the form of ruins or countryside cottages.

The exhibition also displays works by a graduate of the school – and later its head – Johann Carl Schultz, an artist greatly meritorious for the case of rescuing Gdańsk's antiquities and architectural gems, the work of the Association and the establishment of the City Museum in Gdańsk. Among the presented architectural views, which were his speciality, we may see *Interior of the Cathedral in Milan* (Il. 8). The painting presents the monumental body of the cathedral, the grandness of which is underlined by the tiny figures of worshippers shown as staffage. Stained glass windows are a pretext to show the play of light permeating the harsh walls of the church. The work was shown during one of the first exhibitions of the Association, in 1837. It was later purchased by the Heidfeld family of Gdańsk merchants and shipowners. In 1913, Carl Heinrich Heidfeld's widow (Il. 9), Marianna, passed the canvas together with portraits of family members to the museum's collections. The first exhibition also displayed *Arrival of Royal Prince Frederick William to Gdańsk* by Michael Carl Gregorovius (Il. 10). The work combines genre painting and veduta and was painted in a manner typical for the Biedermeier period. We can see Długa Street from the perspective of Długa Street Gate, with the Main Town Hall and Long Market further on. Its architecture provides the background for the eponymous scene of the arrival. At the back of the composition, the



II. 8

Johann Carl Schultz (1801–1873), *Interior of the Cathedral in Milan*,
1831, oil on canvas, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/329/M



II. 9

Carl Vogel von Vogelstein (1788–1869), *Carl Heinrich Friedrich Heidfeld* (1821–1870),
1831, oil on canvas, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/357/M



II. 10

Michael Carl Gregorovius (1787–1850), *Arrival of Crown Prince Frederick William to Gdańsk*,
1835/36, oil on canvas, inv. no. MNG/SD/74/M



II. 11

Michael Carl Gregorovius (1787–1850), *Brabank*, 1838, oil on canvas, private collection

author placed the royal couple observed by crowds of city dwellers – and it is the latter who are actually the topic of the canvas. Groups of inhabitants of the city are watching out for the royal carriage – some of them are enthusiastically cheering, while others, in particular the ones who have not managed to secure a place with a good view, are calmly walking down Długa Street. The faces of the people at the forefront are shown in detail – they are possibly portraits of specific individuals. The scene of a dog fight pictured in the upper right corner may be of importance as well, as it can be a commentary – now difficult to decipher, or may have been simply included for variety’s sake. Another painting by the artist, *Brabank*, presents a place where ships were repaired in Gdańsk for centuries – even before the shipyard was established there in 1827 (from a private collection, II. 11).



II. 12

Wilhelm von Schadow (1788–1862), *Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist*,

1838, oil on canvas, the Raczyński Foundation at the National Museum in Poznań, inv. no. MNP FR 513

Religious and historical painting

What enjoyed particular popularity during the first exhibitions was representations depicting topics drawn from the Bible, classical literature and mythology. The painting of the first half of the 19th century began to depart from references to the culture of the antique and ancient Greek and Roman art which were dominating in academies, for the benefit of the Italian Renaissance, which at the time became an important source of inspiration. We owe the popularisation of the art of Italian masters of the period of Quattrocento inter alia to the Nazarene movement established in Vienna in 1809. Representatives of the group included Wilhelm von Schadow (1788–1862), the later head of the Academy in Düsseldorf, a teacher of many artists from Gdańsk, including Robert Reinick (1805–1852) and Wilhelm August Stryowski. His 1838 painting *Salome with the Head of St. John the Baptist* from the collection of Count Raczyński, currently among the holdings of the National Museum in Poznań (Il. 12), is a good example of the reception of works by Italian masters, showing the artist's efforts to follow the style and manner of depicting the theme. What was significant for the composition of the work was the role of drawing, of the simple spatial construction of the painting in consistency with the geometrical perspective. The view of the staircase in the background provides it with depth.

The Middle Ages were also rediscovered – apart from a fascination with the period's art, in particular the Gothic style, the repertoire of historical events from the times served as an inspiration. The most traditional repertoire, especially valued in the circles of academic painting, began to be presented in a slightly different way, around the mid-19th century. The pathos and focus on the heroism of the protagonists were abandoned for the benefit of scenes with a more universal, even intimate dimension. Artists eagerly drew from the works of William Shakespeare – and selected scenes from his plays – as themes of their paintings.



II. 13

Theodor Hildebrandt (1804–1874), *Murder of King Edward IV's Sons*,

1835, oil on canvas, the Raczyński Foundation at the National Museum in Poznań, inv. no. MNP FR 510

Examples include Otto Brausewetter's *Richard III* from the collection of the City Museum in Gdańsk, lost during the Second World War. It was also from this particular play that the motif of the murder of King Edward IV's sons was taken. The exhibition displays two most famous references to this event. Theodor Hildebrandt presented the story, focusing on showing two innocently sleeping boys not sensing any danger (II. 13); the horror of the scene is built up by the murderers peeking from behind the curtain. In Paul Delaroche's (1797–1856) composition we do not see the figures of the murderers, but the young princes know that a tragic fate awaits them. Presented in a dark room, the boys are sitting on the bed and looking around in anxiety – the young Edward V is hugging his brother. The works of both painters were admired at exhibitions in Gdańsk. Paul Delaroche's composition is repeated in the painting by Józef Simmler (1823–1868) from the collections of the



II. 14

Józef Simmler (1823–1868), *King Edward's Children*,
1847, oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. 184213 MNW

National Museum in Warsaw (II. 14). The collection also included a depiction of the most famous love scene from the play *Romeo and Juliet*, painted by Friedrich Eduard Meyerheim (1808–1879). The painting is a wartime loss, but the collection includes an oil sketch being a preparatory stage for the final composition and a drawing divided into grids which was to facilitate the transfer of the scene onto the canvas.



II. 15

Georg Ferdinand Waldmüller (1793–1865), *Market Scene*,
ca. 1850, oil on canvas, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/370/M

Genre painting

Biedermeier is a style taking its name from the surname of a fictitious merchant. His adventures were published in episodes in the press with a thought in mind of recipients similar to the protagonist: well-to-do city dwellers wishing to live in peace and comfort, and valuing home comforts and family life. This, among other things, resulted in the huge popularity of genre scenes in the art of the period. Famous representatives of the epoch included Georg Ferdinand Waldmüller (1793–1865), whose canvases were much appreciated in Gdańsk. The painting *Market Scene* painstakingly reflects the hustle and bustle of a vegetable market, and shows groups of selling and buying figures whom the artist liked to present (Il. 15). The press called his works 'folk songs' and praised him for depicting the real picture of life.

The author of one of the reviews also referred to the concept of modernity in art, writing that despite the turmoil of 'new times', new art can be observed with joy. As an example, he quoted the painting which was 'calm and cosy in its idea', in which a grandmother was sewing a button on her grandson's trousers. The public liked scenes from family life, and children were eagerly painted. Examples include two images of Paul Meyerheim (1842–1915) by his father, Friedrich Eduard, and a portrait of a girl painted by Robert Reinick (Il. 16). The role of intergenerational bonds was also stressed – hence probably the popularity of images of grandmothers and grandfathers with their grandchildren at play and during daily activities. A grandmother leaning over a granddaughter and helping her learn (probably to read, judging by the book in front of them) is presented in an oil sketch by Friedrich Eduard Meyerheim *Home Education*. The scene takes us to the privacy of the home and emanates peace and cosiness. In turn, children playing outdoors in winter are the topic of paintings by Wilhelm Alexander Meyerheim, brother of Friedrich Eduard, and Eduard Hildebrandt, although in this case the main role is played by an atmospheric winter landscape, since the artist specialised in representations of landscapes.



II. 16

Robert Reinick (1805–1852), *A Girl's Head*,

ca. 1840, oil on canvas and cardboard, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/225/M

II. 17
Hans von Marées (1837–1887),
Dog, 1867,
oil on canvas,
National Museum in Gdańsk,
inv. no. MNG/SD/189/M



II. 18
Carl Steffeck (1818–1890),
Study of a Horse, 1850–1880,
oil on canvas,
National Museum in Gdańsk,
inv. no. MNG/SD/233/M



Popularity was also enjoyed by paintings showing pets and exotic animals. Their images were realistically and aptly represented on canvas by Paul Meyerheim. He painted dogs and cats, but owing to his friendship with the director of the zoological garden he could also observe exotic animals. An excellent ability to express the nature and behaviours of animals can be seen in Hans von Marées' (1837–1887) painting *Dog* (II. 17), although it was not a topic the artist took up often. The work may have been painted under the influence of his education in Berlin under Carl Steffeck (1818–1890) – a painter who could paint dogs and horses with excellent ability (II. 18).

The portrait

The period of Biedermeier was marked by realism in portrait painting and by the accurate reflection of the model's appearance. The valued portraitists in Gdańsk of the first half of the 19th century included Carl Friedrich Meyerheim, a teacher from the Royal School of Fine Arts – the first one from the famous family of painters. The exhibition displayed two images of Johann Jacob Taubert (1738–1824), a brewer from Gdańsk; the paintings are divided by a decade. Both portraits show a man against a dark background, with the face depicted very realistically, with every trace that his age has pressed on his face. A considerable impact on portrait painting was also exerted, in a later period, by photography, which was also interesting for artists, for example Friedrich Wilhelm Huhn (1821–1865), a Gdańsk painter who also ran a photography atelier.

It was of significance to show the model's character. August Kabrun's portrait shows a self-assured, cheerful young man – the portrait was most probably created by Eduard Hildebrandt. However, the image was not painted on the basis of a study of the model, but is a copy of an earlier portrait by Louise Henry (1798–1839), a very popular Berlin female portraitist; a presence in her sketchbook was the object of desire of many a member of the then-milieu, not only from Berlin. The painting created according to her work is the only trace of female painting creativity – there are no works by any of the then-active female Gdańsk or German painters among the museum holdings. The exhibitions did display works by women – both famous female painters from outside Gdańsk, such as the well-known animal painter Clara von Wille (1838–1883), and ones connected with Gdańsk, for instance Frances Stoddart, a sister of John Sprot Stoddart, or Maria Konopacki, who donated her collection of drawings to the City Museum in Gdańsk. Unfortunately, not a single work by any of the numerous represented female artists has managed to survive until our own times in the museum's collection.



II. 19
Eduard Hildebrandt (1818–1869), (?), after Louise Henry (1798–1839), *Portrait of August Kabrun*,
1849, oil on canvas, National Museum in Gdańsk,
inv. no. MNG/SD/175/M

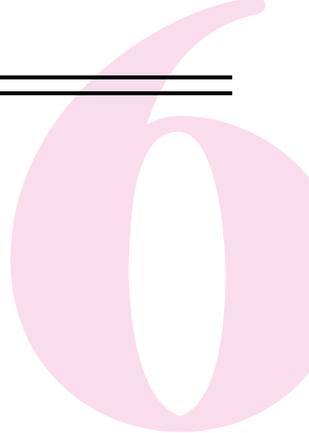
This makes the painting by Anna von Parpart (1854–1910), a student of Wilhelm August Stryowski, presenting her works during many exhibitions organised in Gdańsk, all the more unique (it originates from a private collection).



II. 20

Carl Friedrich Lessing (1808–1880), *Landscape from the Eifel Mountains*,
1834, oil on canvas, National Museum in Warsaw, inv. no. M.Ob.507 MNW

Romantic landscape, light and Hildebrandt



From the mid-19th century onwards, studies from nature played an increasingly significant role in landscape painting. It was the mood and emotions which were important in landscapes from the epoch of Romanticism, and these paintings can often be read in many layers. They are most often a painting record of the artists' wanderings. At the time, artistic journeys took on a momentum and artists often travelled to different places looking for ideal nature and excellent light. Views at different times of the day and periods of the year were also shown, presenting different climatic events. The exhibitions most often displayed landscapes from Germany, but also from Scandinavia, Italy and a new popular direction of artistic and scientific escapades – Brazil. Carl Friedrich Lessing's (1808–1880) *Landscape from the Eifel Mountains* was painted during the artist's journey through Rhineland in 1832 (Il. 20). The monumental mountain range is contrasted with the view of tiny shrines and picturesque ruins.

Without any doubt, the most famous Gdańsk landscapist of the 19th century was Eduard Hildebrandt (1817–1868), who specialised in particular in seascapes. The artist showed the sea in various circumstances – calm waters and quays with fishermen, just like in the painting *By the Shore*, or rough frothy waves on the canvas *Tempest* from the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw. The highest popularity in the City Museum in Gdańsk was enjoyed by the work *Under the Equator*, to which – as the press put it – every visitor directed their first steps – which sadly, was lost during the Second World War. Hildebrandt studied in the Academy in Berlin under the guidance of Wilhelm Krause, and later in Paris in the atelier of the marine painter Eugène Isabey (1803–1886; from the collections of the National Museum in Warsaw). The artist was sociable, popular, and was eagerly listened to when talking about his many voyages. Apart from his artistic peregrinations, he was also a member of the round-the-world geographic



II. 21

Carl Scherres (1833–1923), *Spring Thaw*, ca. 1880, oil on canvas, private collection

expedition organised by Alexander von Humboldt. Every arrival of Hildebrandt in Gdańsk was an event described in the newspapers.

Hildebrandt discovered new landscapes, but Italy continued to be his most important destination. A couple of sketches from the area of Olevano from the period of Robert Reinick's education have survived. For students of the Academy in Düsseldorf, it was an obligatory destination in view of its light, the raw nature of its volcanic rocks and the lush vegetation.

Gdańsk exhibitions offered an opportunity to see works by the most famous landscapists of the time – Andreas Achenbach (1815–1910) and his younger brother, Oswald (1827–1905). Although their works were among the prewar holdings of the museum, none of them have managed to survive. The brothers were referred to as the 'alphas and omegas of landscape painting' and were valued for their ability to show the mood through their view of nature.

Carl Scherres (1833–1923) was valued for his atmospheric views, mainly autumn and winter ones, and the play of light on the water's surface. During the exhibition of the Art Association of Gdańsk held in 1861, the audience was perhaps most

interested in works by Wilhelm August Stryowski, a painter with an already established recognition, and none other than Carl Scherres, a landscapist acting at the time in Gdańsk, whose paintings were much praised in press reviews, which described them as poetic and marked by lively, bright colours. The painting *Flood in Prussia* presents one version of the scene which made the artist popular (II. 21, private collection). A similar canvas was in the collections of the City Museum in Gdańsk, but is now yet another wartime loss.



II. 22

Hermann Prell (1854–1922), *Sketches of Figures* [*Dem Verein – Danziger Kunstler in der Peinkamer*], 1896, oil on canvas, private collection

Historism

References to the history of Gdańsk were eagerly used in painting. Examples include a cycle of paintings commissioned for the Great Court Hall in the Main Town Hall. Hermann Prell's sketch with a study of male figures was probably made as a part of preparations for the creation of the composition *Siege of Wisłoujście Fortress* (Il. 22). Important purchases of the Association included a painting commissioned from Ludwig Rosenfelder, *Pankracy Klemme*, presenting the beginnings of the Reformation in Gdańsk. The work is on the list of wartime losses and we know it only from photographs. It was commissioned with the thought of the future museum in mind, since it was to commemorate a moment referred to as a breakthrough in the city's history. The exhibitions were accompanied by catalogues – usually short ones, containing a list of the presented exhibits. The catalogue of the exhibition during which Rosenfelder's work was premièred, also featured a substantive introduction with a description of the painting. Wilhelm August Stryowski's canvas *Polish Gentry in Gdańsk*, which presents a group of noblemen on a stoop with beggars around them, is also a reference to the city's past. The men are looking at the poor with a mix of amusement and contempt. The contrast between the well-clad men and the paupers at their feet is striking. The canvas was certainly to be a critique of the behaviour of the privileged estate and to underline the difficult situation of the poor. The painting refers to the so-called golden period in the history of the city in the early modern era. Stryowski himself could not possibly see noblemen in the impressive Polish attire who used to be frequently seen on the streets. The artist possibly imagined the contrast between the noblemen and the poor.



II. 24

Friedrich Eduard Meyerheim (1808–1879)

Return from the Field, after 1850, oil on paper and cardboard

National Museum in Gdańsk inv. no. MNG/SD/208/M

Fascination with folk culture and ethnography



At the time, apart from the history of the Middle Ages, people were also interested in folk culture and ethnography. The impact of the research of ethnographers and archaeologists on painting was also underlined in the Gdańsk press as a novelty breaking with the traditional depiction of topics in painting – in particular the religious one. One of the reviews refers to Brandt's painting *Ukrainian Soldiers* – admiring the painting's light and space, but also the presentation of an alien and incomprehensible world in such a way that the viewer believes that the scene is realistic, shown with 'national enthusiasm'. The rather unknown painting was bought for the museum in Königsberg, while the exhibition shows a study for the painting *Escape of the Tatars*, presenting three views of a man in Tatar clothes. Examples of other Gdańsk interests also include studies of raftsmen in works by Wilhelm August Stryowski, who also portrayed the Jewish minority.

What is also typical is a liberal approach to putting together in the paintings objects characteristic for a given region or times without care for compliance with the reality or historical correctness. Changes to religious painting were also under way. It was slowly replaced with scenes depicting church services and other festivities and genre scenes with figures immersed in prayer and referring to the Bible, but painted in a more 'poetic and romantic' manner.

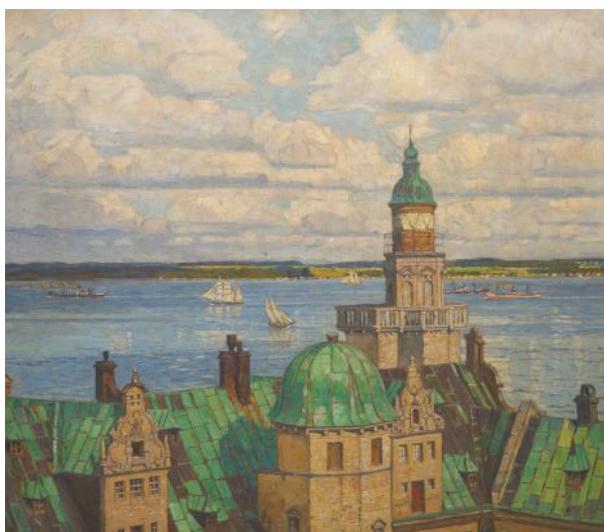


II. 24

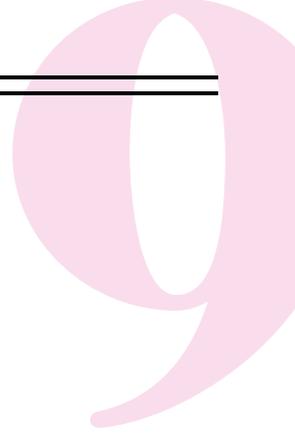
Arthur Bendrat (1872–1914), *Canal in Nowy Port*,
1907, oil on canvas, National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/240/MD

II. 25

Arthur Bendrat (1872–1914),
Kronborg Castle, 1909, oil on canvas,
National Museum in Gdańsk,
inv. no. MNG/SD/303/M



Formal experiments and modernity



Towards the end of the 19th century, exhibitions reflected the new tendencies of the painting of the time – the impact of French impressionists was most noticeable. Reviews were varied – from enthusiastic ones to ones criticising 'snobbery and excessive French influences'.

Examples of the reception of French painting include Bernhard Maximilian Sturmhoefel (1853–1913) and his painting *Children at Play*, painted with broad and thick brush strokes, with the use of chiaroscuro shaped with the help of contrasting patches of colour. The exhibition also features a recently recovered painting by Arthur Bendrat (1872–1914) *Canal in Nowy Port* (II. 24). The work is one of the several canvases by the artist from the prewar collections of the City Museum in Gdańsk. It shows a view of the quay and the canal in Nowy Port, with land visible in the background, and is a rare depiction of this district of the city. The manner of the painting reflects the impact of the impressionists – the work is painted with fast, unconstrained brush strokes, and the play of specks of summer sun reflected in the surface of the water certainly attracts attention. The work was created at the peak of the artist's career, his greatest creative activity and at the time when he exhibited most in solo and collective shows. The painter specialised in popular views of towns and cities, which were often reproduced on postcards. The exhibition also displays a view of the castle in Kronborg and a landscape by the Vistula – both from the collections of the National Museum in Gdańsk (II. 25).



Hans von Marées (1837–1887),

Dog, 1867, oil on canvas

National Museum in Gdańsk, inv. no. MNG/SD/189/M



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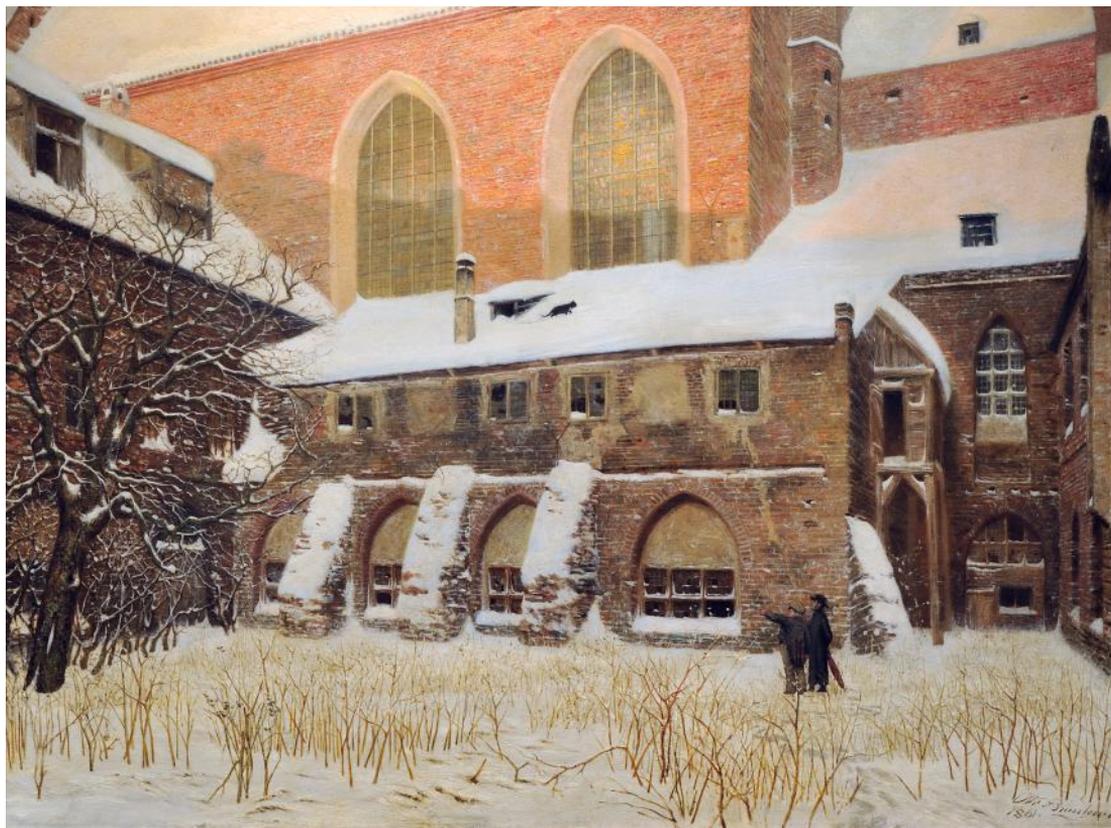
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Garth of the Franciscan Monastery in Gdańsk,
1861, oil on canvas,
inv. no. MNG/SD/304/M

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