

Summary

Wojciech Szymański / Albrecht Dürer's gloves. On Jan Białostocki's early writings

The article offers a critical reading of a few pieces (both academic papers on art history and general public-oriented essays) written in the 1950s by professor Jan Białostocki, one of the best and, indisputably, most important Polish art historians of the last century. The following analyses of the texts, which so far have been overlooked by the researchers, oscillate around the concept of realism. This category, which was one of the most popular in the Polish humanities of the 1950s (including art history and criticism), is typically linked to the jargon of socialist realism as well as Marxism that was then elevated to the rank of scientific dogma and ideology governing the public discourse. The article claims that such readings – ideologically charged and thus biased – are, in fact, highly inadequate. Instead, the paper postulates an application of functional analysis of the concept of realism to Białostocki's writings, which is understood as a category which originated in a series of debates conducted in the 1930s by German-speaking and left-wing intellectuals (i.e. B. Brecht, H. Mann, G. Lukács). Consequently, the category is seen as the one which remains unrelated either to socialist realism, or to conventional and descriptive use of realism associated with the idea of *mimesis*. On the contrary, realism is defined as a specific narrative frame of the story – the discourse of art history being the latter. Taking into account this narrativist character of art history as a discipline, the arguments analysed in the article are attributed not so much to Jan Białostocki but rather to a narrator/author/storyteller of his essays. The paper also shows how the category in question – inspired by Marxism and used by Białostocki in the middle of the last century for the first time – is related to iconology understood as a method present in Białostocki's later works, i.e. pieces which are seen from the present-day perspective as classic, useful and widely read indeed.