

Summary

AGATA KUBALA (University of Wrocław) / Greek mirrors. A study of forms based on items from Eduard Schaubert's collection

The article aims at discussing mirrors manufactured in ancient Greece, which is based on analysis of the preserved items from the collection of Eduard Schaubert, a Wrocław architect and a collector of antiquities. The ancient Greeks used three sorts of mirrors made almost exclusively of bronze. The oldest and the most frequently used type, in operation since the Mycenaean period, was a hand mirror with a simple holder and a disc polished on one side so finely that it was capable of reflecting images, and on the other side decorated with engraved or relief, mythological or genre scenes. The real masterpieces of Greek small-sized metal sculpture were standing mirrors, also called caryatid mirrors, which appeared at the beginning of the 6th century BC. Similarly as hand mirrors, they used to have a disc polished on one side, with a support in form of a female figure standing on the base of various shapes. The caryatid mirror disc edges were often decorated with little figures of animals, birds and fantastic creatures. Such animal or mythological figures were also placed between a disc and caryatid's arms. Standing mirrors were luxurious products, marked with high artistic quality, manufactured within a limited area, and in a short period only. Their production was stopped at the end of the 5th century BC, when they were replaced with box mirrors, manufactured mainly in the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. They were made of two perfectly matched discs joined with hinges, of which discs the lower one, finely polished, used to serve as a proper mirror, and the upper one, decorated with reliefs, was a cover protecting the mirror surface. All three sorts of Greek mirrors, preserved completely or partially only, are represented in the collection of The National Museum in Warsaw. We owe these to the Wrocław architect and his deep interest in the art of ancient Greece.