

Time travel from Berlin to Gdańsk

Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki's 18th century journey revisited – contemporary renderings and Interpretations

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Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki (1726–1801) was one of the most outstanding artists of the 18th century. He was hugely productive, as a painter, and even more so as a prolific draughtsman and as a print-maker with an artistic output of more than two thousand etchings, many of them illustrations to calendars and chronicles. His body of work – in combination with his extant letters and diaries – serves as an extraordinary record of the cultural and social lives of the Rococo period. In Berlin, where he spent most of his adult life, Chodowiecki was an active member of the Huguenot church, an influential participant of the congregation and as such, he designed the sculptural programme for the “Französischer Dom”, the church on Berlin Gendarmenmarkt. As member and later Director the Preußische Akademie der Künste in Berlin, he instigated some ground-breaking reforms and transformed the institution from a school into an artists’ association, which continues in this form to this day².

On 3 VI 1773 Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki embarked on a journey on horseback from Berlin to his birthplace Danzig (Gdańsk)³ [fig. 1]. After a 30-year period of absence from his hometown, the well-established artist was motivated by the prospect of being reunited with his family: his mother, sisters and two aunts. The possibility of the relatives’ visit or even relocation to Berlin had been pondered in various letters, but was deemed impossible due to the long and exhausting journey, and furthermore because the women were well-integrated and connected in Danzig and concerned about missing out on a perspective inheritance. As his mother was over 70, Chodowiecki must have been aware that the journey might have been the last opportunity to see her, and as it turned out, it was⁴. Besides sentimental reasons,

¹ The authors wish to thank the Akademie der Künste Berlin for their kind permission to reproduce the D. Chodowiecki's drawings in this article.

² See **Ch. Steinbrucker**, *Daniel Chodowiecki und die Akademie der Künste in Berlin*, “Mitteilungen des Vereins für die Geschichte Berlins” 1926, no. 7/9. See also **W. Heegewaldt**, „Sie wissen [...] nicht liebster Herr Director, was eine Academie ist”. *Daniel Chodowiecki und Bernhard Rode im Streit um die Akademieform*, [in:] *Turmbewohner. Entwurfszeichnungen von Daniel Chodowiecki und Bernhard Rode für Gendarmenmarkt* [exhibition cat.], ed. **A. Schultz**, 23 I – 12 IV 2015, Alte Nationalgalerie in Berlin, Berlin 2014.

³ As the city of Gdańsk was still known as Danzig throughout Chodowiecki's lifetime, we will refer to it as such when discussing the historical context but change to Gdańsk when talking about contemporary art and the current situation. For more information about 18th century Gdańsk see e.g. *History of Gdańsk*, ed. **E. Cieślak**, **C. Biernat**, transl. B. Blaim, G. M. Hyde, Gdańsk 1995, pp. 185–289.

⁴ Chodowiecki's next visit to Gdańsk took place in May 1779 on the occasion of his mother's passing on.

1. D. N. Chodowiecki, *Farewell from the Family* (3 VI 1773), ink and wash, 10,1 × 16, Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Kunstsammlung, inv. no. Chodowiecki. Photo: AdK¹

Chodowiecki was driven by the perspective of establishing a new client base. The fact that he extended his stay in Danzig to eight weeks as he left on 10 VIII 1773 and throughout his stay kept very busy executing, selling and framing art works, portraits in particular, indicates that this plan worked out.

Chodowiecki documented this trip in a diary, which survives at the Berlin Staatsbibliothek and a series of 108 drawings, 107 of which are now kept in the art collection of the Berlin Akademie der Künste⁵. It is worth to mention that until recently, Chodowiecki's text was known only from a transcript by Ellen Dubois-Reymond, which survives at Berlin's Staatsbibliothek. The original manuscript by Chodowiecki survived as part of the diaries 1772–1775 in a private collection and has only been added to the series of the artists' diaries which are being kept as part of "Depositum 5" of the Runge-Debois-Reymond bequest, about three years ago. According to Robert Violet, archivist at the Französischer Dom, Berlin, the comparison of Chodowiecki's original manuscript with the later copy shows various irregularities. In combination, these two sources are one of the most encompassing and remarkable documents of an artist's journey during 18th century, fascinating not only as a sourcebook for images and a document of everyday life, but outstanding also with regards to the carefully thought-out narrative programme, which remains unequalled. The drawings served as a source for the reconstruction of Gdańsk's architecture after the war and have recently been revisited by a group of contemporary artists who embarked on the same journey by minibus, reflecting upon Chodowiecki's and equally their own experiences in the form of art works in various media.

It is perhaps coincidental but must not go unmentioned, that Chodowiecki's drawings also reflect upon an important historical turning point. In 1772, the first partition of Poland had led to the foundation of West Prussia. Much to the dismay of Frederick II, Danzig had remained with Poland as an independent city. With military force, the Prussian King attempted to apply economic pressure: water routes to the harbour were blocked, high taxes imposed and the trade hindered in an attempt to establish the Prussian city of Elbing (now: Elbląg) as a new centre for sea trade and commerce. For the traveller Chodowiecki, the new political developments might have eased the undertaking. At the same time, they provoked a deeper awareness of Polish "otherness". Simultaneously, the new developments must have invited Chodowiecki to critically assess his own cultural identity and how he were to position himself within the new political framework. Whilst he was an established member of Berlin society – his various portraits of Prussian royals underline his loyalty to the crown – he was simultaneously somewhat of an outsider, a descendant of a family of immigrants, born to a French mother of Huguenot descent and a Polish father, and an active member of the French church. He spoke little or no Polish, yet, during his journey, he seemed to have mingled easily with the Danzig society and referred to himself as a "Polish painter" in his diary. It is also evident that he was drawn to recording and pointing out Polish customs and costumes, presumably in an attempt to underline the value of these cultural identities which, given the political circumstances, he must have worried to be under threat.

Examining the drawings, one can easily distinguish between two groups: on the one hand there are sketch-like figure studies, which might have been drawn *in situ* as *aides memoires* to document certain types of people in their typical attire. On the other, there are 50 more refined scenes, carefully executed in pen with various washes. The latter were certainly drawn after Chodowiecki's return to Berlin and over a long period of at least three years⁶. Helmut Börsch-Supan, in an attempt to reconstruct the original order of the extant drawings, has identified at least three original sketchbooks, which were later dissolved and partly trimmed in order to form a series of more uniform appearance⁷.



2. D. N. Chodowiecki, *In a Kashubian Village* (10 VI 1773), ink and wash, 11,1 × 18,4. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Kunstsammlung, inv. no. Chodowiecki 14. Photo: AdK

What, one might wonder, is the intended function of this sketchbook, especially with regards to the finely executed drawings? It is noticeable that they closely follow the text and serve as illustrations to the latter. The personal encounters and experiences along the journey, some of them seemingly random or ordinary, are illustrated in great detail. Only rarely, such as in the scene where Chodowiecki is offered a three year old child for sale in a Kashubian village, does the spectator experience glimpses of the grim realities of the poor country population [fig. 2].

There is a strong focus on the ordinary, the random acquaintances and Chodowiecki's horse take centre stage – the acquisition of it, feeding and evaluating of his travel companion is discussed at great length. Noticeable sites and picturesque landscapes are by and large omitted. The sketchbook and diary are personal travel accounts, redundant as guide books for prospective tourists or travellers. It is noticeable that Chodowiecki himself is represented in many of the drawings. He depicts himself casually, in conversation or sketching, but usually seen from behind as part of a carefully choreographed, seemingly cinematic scenes, and observed from a distance⁸. Even in the more personal scenes, such as the one in which he is taking leave from his Berlin family or greeting his mother, the artist's face is obscured. Individual features can hardly be made out, only with the aid of the accompanying text is the viewer assured

⁵ Whereas the great majority of drawings were returned to the Akademie after the World War II, one drawing, the *Journey to Strieß in the Rain*, remains missing. For an illustration see *Kriegsverluste der Preußischen Akademie der Künste*, ed. I. Hägele, G. Schmidt, G. Schneider, Berlin 2005, fig. 538.

⁶ See W. Geismeyer, *Daniel Chodowiecki*, Leipzig 1993, p. 146.

⁷ H. Börsch-Supan, *Chodowieckis Zeichnungen von seiner Danziger Reise, Wahrheit und Dichtung*, [in:] *Daniel Chodowieckis Reise von Berlin nach Danzig im Jahre 1773* (Akademie-Fenster 4), Konz. G. Schmidt, ed. H. Gutsche, M. Danielewicz, Berlin 2001, p. 26.

⁸ Cinematic qualities in Chodowiecki's works can be detected elsewhere. We are grateful to the film maker and Chodowiecki expert Jakub Paćzek for pointing out to me how Chodowiecki's prints have been an influence in particular on S. Kubrick (who owned a series of reproduction of the *Journey*), an observation Paćzek is pursuing further in his work. See M. McVey, *Kubrick's "Barry Lyndon" – Influence of Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki*, <http://skiffleboom.wordpress.com/2013/06/29/the-complete-stanley-kubrick-exhibit-at-lacma-skiffleboom-com/kubricks-barry-lyndon-influence-of-daniel-niklaus-chodowiecki> (access date: 24 II 2020).



3. D. N. Chodowiecki, *Długa Street in Gdańsk* (11 VI 1773), ink and wash, gouache, 11,2 × 18,4. Photo: Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Kunstsammlung, inv. no. Chodowiecki 21. Photo: AdK

who is depicted. The artist seamlessly blends into the scenes. He has immersed himself in the culture of his homeland and presents himself as an integral part of the high society of Danzig. The lack of individual features and the carefully framed compositions also indicate that the series might have served a broader purpose than self-promotion. The drawings add up to a carefully constructed portrayal of a cultured society, which featured the artist at its very core.

Diary entries document that Chodowiecki showed the series to numerous visitors. He also offered the group of drawings for sale, asking for the hefty sum of 1000 thalers⁹. We can thus assume that although documenting a personal experience, the series was executed for presentation rather than sentimental private contemplation. The fact that Chodowiecki executed at least one etching¹⁰ after a drawing from the journey representing himself at a desk drawing in his mother's room, might serve as an indication that he intended to duplicate more of the drawings with the goal of marketing the reproductions. Due to the foul-biting on the plate, only a small number of impressions were pulled from it and the print is thus exceedingly rare. Even though no other drawings from the journey were directly copied in etchings, drawn elements are detectable in later works, such as the title vignette for Johann Wolfgang Goethe's *Sorrows of the Young Werther* (1775)¹¹, in which the central figures are bearing strong resemblance to the drawing showing Chodowiecki's farewell from his wife on 3 VI 1773.

⁹ See W. Geismeyer, *op. cit.*, p. 147.

¹⁰ W. Engelmann, *Daniel Chodowiecki's sämtliche Kupferstiche*, Leipzig 1857, nr 109a (pp. 74–75). See J. H. Bauer, *Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, Danzig, 1726–1801, Berlin. Das Druckgrafische Werk. Die Sammlung Wilhelm Burggraf zu Dohna-Schlobitten. Ein Bildband mit 2340 Abbildungen in Ergänzung zum Werkverzeichnis von Wilhelm Engelmann*, Hannover 1982, p. 46 (fig. 207).

¹¹ W. Engelmann, *op. cit.*, nr 120 II (p. 80). See J. H. Bauer, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

The identification with one's hometown, and at the same time the possibility of mobility between the countries of Europe, had become a crucial part of the intellectual education in the times of the Enlightenment. The broadening of one's knowledge through travels and direct contact with the European heritage were also the core of the popular practice of *grand tour*. However, in this case it was neither the thirst for knowledge, nor the curiosity about ancient monuments that motivated Chodowiecki to saddle his horse and set off on a ten-day travel on its back. Was it the longing for the home town he left behind as a teenager? For family and friends? Inferring from the restrained emotions in the written descriptions, as well as quite limited amount of time he in fact devoted to his family during his stay, it is hard to sustain this hypothesis. A more likely reason, at the same time closest to the contemporary travel theories, would be: self-reflection.

Regardless of the dominant perspective Chodowiecki assumed while portraying and documenting his travel from Berlin to Danzig, be it a retrospective view filled with the tenderness of a son who returns after long years to pay tribute to his home town¹², or a perspective of an outside observer rather detached but captivated by what he sees¹³, his travel journal is undoubtedly a relevant document of his epoch, and a vital source of inspiration to this day. The illustrations provide an interesting insight into diverse aspects of the material culture of Danzig from 1773 in so far as apartment interiors, streets and gardens, landscapes of the city and its surroundings, and the cross-section of sociological types are concerned¹⁴. Their visual qualities, based on meticulous attention to details, supported by concrete and precise written remarks, have proven to be of great historical significance many years after they had been created. When in 1993 the Historical Museum of Gdańsk (presently referred to as Museum of Gdańsk) commenced to work on the revitalisation and revalorisation of the so-called Uphagen's House – a patrician house originally dating back to 1775, which was almost totally destroyed during World War II, Chodowiecki's drawings from his travel to Danzig in 1773 were, alongside other historical references from the 18th, 19th and 20th century, closely consulted as comparative visual material both for the reconstruction of the interiors¹⁵ and the exterior part of the house¹⁶. Historical accuracy was the utmost priority, as the reconstruction of the whole Main Town of Gdańsk, whose war destruction amounted up to 90%, played an enormous compensational role for the local society¹⁷. In order to retain the precision of the details, archival documents, among them also photographs and drawings, were carefully referred to. Images of local interiors created in the epoch were sought after and consulted closely when it came to the Uphagen House's interior arrangement. They included the ones drawn by Chodowiecki resulting from the numerous visits he paid in similar houses during his stay in Danzig. The same method was used for the purpose of the exterior reconstruction – the arrangement of stairs, railing and terrace, were possibly based on Chodowiecki's drawing illustrating *Długa Street* [fig. 3]. In this way his works acquired a new and unexpected life, one probably never envisioned by the artist himself, symbolic for their meaning and function in the context of material heritage preservation.

In the context of heritage, the memory concerning Chodowiecki has been for many years both in Poland and Germany addressed through the questions of his nationality, often at the cost of the attention which should be devoted to his artistic production¹⁸. Both German and Polish researchers have claimed Chodowiecki as representative of their national heritage, proving his attachment to either of the two

¹² See M. Paszylka, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Daniela Chodowieckiego dziennik z podróży do Gdańska z 1773 roku*, Gdańsk 2002, p. XVIII.

¹³ See I. Turnau, *Kultura materialna oświecenia w rycinach Daniela Chodowieckiego*, Wrocław 1968, p. 20.

¹⁴ See M. Paszylka, *op. cit.*, p. XI–XII.

¹⁵ See E. Szymańska-Baryłewska, W. Szymański, *Dom Uphagena. Dzieje muzeum wnętrza*, [in:] *Gdańsk. Pomnik historii*, ed. A. Kostarczyk, part 2, Gdańsk 2011, pp. 115–116.

¹⁶ See *idem*, *Dom Uphagena w Gdańsku*, Gdańsk 2006, p. 11.

¹⁷ See J. Friedrich, *Wystrój dekoracyjny Drogi Królewskiej w Gdańsku w latach 1953–1955*, "Gdańskie Studia Muzealne" vol. 6 (1995), pp. 111–112.

¹⁸ See I. Turnau, *op. cit.*, p. 18–19.

countries, assessed by the degree of his sense of belonging towards Germany and Berlin, and, on the other hand, by his obviously Polish sounding surname and a number of Polish themes which inspired his art, including events and people important in Polish history¹⁹, but also the record of his travel and sojourn in Gdańsk. This tendency, perhaps unintentionally, lingered for many years, the best evidence of which may be the fact that the Polish version of the travel journal from Berlin to Gdańsk, which was not published until 2002, has interestingly been entitled: *Daniela Chodowieckiego dziennik z podróży do Gdańska z 1773 roku* (Daniel Chodowiecki's Travel Journal to Gdańsk in 1773), omitting the part "from Berlin"²⁰.

The rhetoric of the discourse around Chodowiecki, however, has slowly evolved from situating him within the tangible heritage, to making him eventually part of the intangible heritage of Gdańsk as well. It was actually Günter Grass who rediscovered Chodowiecki for Gdańsk by presenting him as the author of "perceptive" drawings portraying the city with a "realistic charm", along with the cross-section of its citizens regardless of their profession, social status or religious beliefs²¹. Grass saw in Chodowiecki a prototype of the 18th century European – living and creating beyond geographical, national or religious borders in line with the ideals of Enlightenment, parallel to the ones represented currently by the European Union. Furthermore, Grass associated Chodowiecki with a symbol of good neighbourly relations between Poland and Germany, highlighting the fact that the nationalistic imperative to classify the artist as either Polish or German not only deepened the gap between the two nations, but also impeded the cultivation and preservation of Chodowiecki's heritage itself. In his speech from 1991 Grass also complained that the memory places associated with Chodowiecki, like his family house in the Main Town of Gdańsk, or the memory of his overall *oeuvre* have not been efficiently addressed. However, in an interview from 2004 he already enthusiastically applauded the Mayor's plans to establish a Chodowiecki Museum in Gdańsk²².

Indeed the attention given to Chodowiecki over the recent years has increased considerably and has acquired new directions. After many years, the city of Gdańsk decided to establish an art centre called Dom Daniela Chodowieckiego i Güntera Grassa (Daniel Chodowiecki and Günter Grass House) which officially became a branch of the City Gallery in 2019 and is currently under construction. Moreover, the memory of Chodowiecki himself has entered the local identity discourse. His multinational origins made him a modern cosmopolitan²³, and allowed to include him in the local identity spectrum without the imperative of ascribing him to one particular nationality²⁴. His open-mindedness and attention devoted to diverse social strata brought him close to both the past and present local community. Soon Chodowiecki started embodying an epitome of desirable local virtues: tolerance, religiosity, hard work,

frugality, respect for the value of money, but at the same time love of art²⁵. He also became the symbol of multiculturalism, often presently interpreted rather as cultural pluralism, which became one of the key-words defining the local identity politics promoted both by intellectual²⁶ and political elites²⁷. In this way Chodowiecki constitutes a vital missing link in the cultural translation, enabling cultural and communicative continuity²⁸ to be found between Gdańsk and Europe, but also between the Gdańsk of today and its own multi-layered and multi-national history. Since Chodowiecki – having been incorporated in the local cultural identity discussion – has only fairly recently become a subject of institutionalization, there arose a need to actively search for ways to familiarize, understand and personalize his heritage also on the level of social awareness. According to various surveys concerning elements of local identity, Chodowiecki has thus far not been recognized by the local community as part of the pantheon of important "Danzigers" who contributed to the glory and fame of their city²⁹. One of the ways to embed a subject in the consciousness of the public is to include it within the local cultural strategies, followed by a series of actions and events aiming at its promotion and popularisation. This is how the project *From Berlin to Gdańsk* came about in 2018. It consisted of two stages: a study field trip in the footsteps of Daniel Chodowiecki in 2018, and an exhibition that followed in 2019. At the beginning, a few major questions were asked: what do we know about Chodowiecki? What does his *oeuvre* mean to us and can it still inspire us in 21st century? And finally, what are the possible ways to get to know the artist better in order to draw that inspiration from him?

Since it is indisputable that the travel journal *From Berlin to Gdańsk* is indeed the major work created by Chodowiecki which connects him with his home town, its content became the fundamental source of inspiration for the contemporary project. We can nowadays only speculate whether Chodowiecki's journey was motivated by a personal need to detach himself for a while from his everyday professional and private surrounding in Berlin. Perhaps as a well-established mature man he set on a trip back to the scraps of memories from his home town, in order to perform a sort of rite of passage in the face of some significant transition in his mental or public life³⁰? Such self-exploration through travels was of course nothing original in those days. Moreover, it developed through 19th century to acquire a more didactic dimension, to finally become a way of life in the 21st century, a contemporary "tourist syndrome" providing "a platform for the exploration of difference and otherness"³¹.

Hence, it is often the case that travelling in the present post-modern times often plays a significant role in the reinforcement of contemporary culture and the cultivation of its awareness³². The best way to practice it is through direct experience³³. Thus, five contemporary artists originating from Gdańsk were invited to assume the role of peculiar travellers, in order to recreate the trip that would allow them to get closer to all kinds of meanings that Chodowiecki is supposed to entail in relation to the local heritage, identity and memory. They were entrusted with a double task: on the one hand, to directly follow Chodowiecki's path and observe what he observed through a contemporary filter, but on the other hand,

¹⁹ See A. Kraushar, *Daniel Chodowiecki, jego sceny dziejowe polskie oraz wizerunki królów, wodzów, dygnitarzy, uczonych i typów ludowych polskich rytowane na schyłku XVIII wieku*, Warszawa 1930, p. 10–13.

²⁰ The phrase "from Berlin" was included in the first edition of the German translation from French: *Von Berlin nach Danzig. Eine Künstlerfahrt im 1773 Jahre von Daniel Chodowiecki. 108 Lichtdrucke nach dem Originalen in der Königl. Akademie der Künste in Berlin*, ed. W. von Oettingen, Berlin 1895), as well as in the later edition by: *Daniel Chodowiecki. Die Reise von Berlin nach Danzig*, ed. W. Geismeyer, Berlin 1994). However, the quoted Polish translation was based on the second edition of German version of the journal: *Künstlerfahrt nach Danzig im Jahre 1773. Des Künstlers Tagebuch dieser Reise in deutscher Übertragung und das Skizzenbuch in getreuer Nachbildung*, ed. W. Franke, Leipzig 1919. See M. L. Figurniak, *The Journal and Letters of Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki (1726–1801) Polish–German printmaker, engraver and painter ego–documents as an example and expression of national identity*, "Biuletyn Polskiej Misji Historycznej" vol. 8 (2013), p. 242.

²¹ See G. Grass, *Na przykład Chodowiecki. Mowa wygłoszona podczas ewangelickiego Dnia Kościoła w Dortmundzie z okazji podpisania niemiecko–polskiego układu o dobrym sąsiedztwie (1991)*, [in:] *Przypominam sobie... Günter Grass o Danzigu, Gdańsku i Polsce. Rozmowy, eseje i listy (1962–2006)*, ed. D. Stolz, transl. S. Lisiecka, Gdańsk 2019.

²² See *Mój stosunek do polskiego Gdańska rozwijał się z biegiem lat. Rozmowa Güntera Grassa i Pawła Huelle moderowana przez Tibora M. Ridegha (2004)*, [in:] *Przypominam sobie...*, p. 61.

²³ See K. Zabuska, *Kolekcja Jacoba Kabruna. Ryciny szkoły niemieckiej od końca XV do początku XIX wieku*, part 2: *Ryciny Daniela Chodowieckiego*, catalogue of the National Museum in Gdańsk, Gdańsk 2015, p. 14.

²⁴ See P. O. Loew, *Danzig erinnert sich an Daniel Chodowiecki. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der lokalen Geschichtskultur im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, [in:] *Gdańszczanin w Berlinie. Daniel Chodowiecki i kultura 2. połowy XVIII wieku w Europie Północnej*, ed. E. Kizik, E. Barylewska–Szymańska, W. Szymański, Gdańsk 2002, p. 131.

²⁵ See M. Bogucka, *Gdańskie korzenie Daniela Chodowieckiego*, [in:] *Gdańsk – Polska – Europa. Praca zbiorowa ofiarowana profesorowi doktorowi habilitowanemu Władysławowi Zajewskiemu w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Z. Kropidłowski, Gdańsk 2001, p. 47.

²⁶ See C. Obracht–Prondzyński, *Wielokulturowość Gdańska – konteksty historyczne, wyzwania współczesne*, [in:] *Kalendarz Gdański 2018*, Gdańsk 2017.

²⁷ See P. Adamowicz, *Gdańsk jako wyzwanie*, Gdańsk 2008, p. 82.

²⁸ See A. Tyszcza, *Przestrzeń kulturowa „środka Europy”*, [in:] *Roża wiatrów Europy. O środkowoeuropejskiej tożsamości kulturowej*, ed. A. Tyszcza, Warszawa 1999, p. 32.

²⁹ See J. Załęcki, *Przestrzeń społeczna Gdańska w świadomości jego mieszkańców. Studium socjologiczne*, Gdańsk 2003, p. 77–79.

³⁰ See J. Tokarska–Bakir, *Wstęp*, [in:] *Arnold van Gennep. Obrzędy przejścia*, transl. B. Biały, Warszawa 2006, p. 7.

³¹ *The Tourist Syndrome*, an interview Z. Bauman by A. Franklin, [in:] *Transient Spaces – The Tourist Syndrome*, ed. M. Sorbello, A. Weitzel, Berlin 2010, p. 8, 12.

³² See D. MacCannell, *Turysta. Nowa teoria klasy próżniaczej / The Tourist. A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, transl. E. Klekot, A. Wieczorkiewicz, Warszawa 2002, p. XIX.

³³ See *ibidem*, p. 106.



4. "From Berlin to Gdańsk", exhibition detail. Photo and courtesy of: A. Piasecka

to indirectly take active part in the process of constructing local cultural identity by, firstly, reconstructing a certain set of memories, and, secondly, internalizing and interpreting the given subject connected with particular historical, geographical and cultural values, in order to build their own contemporary senses on top of it³⁴.

The whole project was based on two major methodological premises: empirical recreation of the journey itself, and interdisciplinarity of applied artistic means of expression. The first premise was supported by the idea of the perception walk (*Wahrnehmungspaziergang*) – a popular research method derived from ethnology, which has been lately successfully applied to broadly defined cultural studies as well. It is predominantly based on collecting field notes, often shaped by subjective observations, impressions, direct experiences registered in order to achieve a better orientation and deeper reflection on the analyzed subject³⁵. That is why the artists were challenged to recreate Chodowiecki's journey step by step, visiting all the places he encountered and portrayed with the help of words

and images on his way, in order to confront them with the present day reality. Naturally, the comparative reflections were thus encouraged, but equally important was the sense of close observation and in-depth analysis of everyday, seemingly insignificant details.

It is almost a truism to say that the post-industrial man lives among various media³⁶. This existence produces new kind of communication habits based on the audio-visual and multimedia tools which are more and more if not natural, then almost obligatory in the post-modern world³⁷. This intertwining of diverse media as a basis for the project building and communication played a significant role in engaging not only the artists in constructing more personal and subjective works, but also in inviting the future audience to participate in and deconstruct their multi-sensory and multi-layered meanings³⁸. Therefore the combination and interrelation of five different disciplines: photography, drawing/graphic art, sound art with strong emphasis on creative reportage, video art and literature, allowed to create a coherent but also diversified final outcome constituting a contemporary version of Chodowiecki's written and illustrated travel journal. The artists took up the task to bridge the spatio-temporal experiences represented in Chodowiecki's journal and their own works, in experimental but also individualised way.

³⁴ See M. Castells, *Siła tożsamości*, ed. M. Marody, transl. S. Szymański, Warszawa 2008, p. 23.

³⁵ See *Methoden der empirischen Forschung*, <http://un-gesund.de/forschungsrahmen/methoden> (access date: 17 XII 2019).

³⁶ See B. Wolek-Kocur, *Człowiek między mediami. O ponowoczesnych doświadczeniach intermedialności*, [in:] *Konteksty intermedialności*, ed. M. Popczyk, Katowice 2013, p. 88.

³⁷ See *ibidem*, p. 89.

³⁸ See M. Popczyk, *Konteksty intermedialności*, [in:] *Konteksty intermedialności...*, p. 7.



5. "From Berlin to Gdańsk", exhibition detail. Photo: B. Kociumbas, courtesy of Gdańska Galeria Miejska

The Polaroid photographs taken by Agnieszka Piasecka [fig. 4] were created with the use of her unique experimental technique, which involves drowning the film in water in order to achieve physical deformation of the photographs, as well as distorting the colours and shapes of portrayed architecture, giving the impression of the unreality of the images, as if they were hung in between the past and the present. At first glance, it is quite impossible to date the photographs. The layer of the image peels of the photographic paper, endowing the portrayed historical architecture with a prevailing sense of transience. The imperative to attribute it to particular time and space does not apply here, as the tangibility of the architectonic images becomes secondary in comparison with their metaphysical timeless aura.

During the journey Tomasz Kopcewicz kept a sketch-book in which he would draw his everyday observations [fig. 5]. Selected images were eventually turned into linocuts. He chose every day, seemingly insignificant situations. Strangers are often portrayed with their back towards the onlooker, as if their identity was completely irrelevant. Random fragments of architecture, representing both public and private sphere, were captured in a form of visual quotations. There is no voyeurism, although the artist seems to take on a perspective of a detached observer. The drawings are characteristic rather of some sense of distant curiosity towards the immediate surrounding composed equally of humans and objects. Even though the protagonists very often bear contemporary attributes, one feels no compulsion in defining neither time nor space they have been portrayed in. The simplicity of the visual anecdote itself, close attention to the smallest detail defining the unaware model's behaviour or situation, constitute the quintessence of these works.

Similar impressions define the colourful drawings of Maciej Salamon [fig. 6], presenting images of women with their baby-trolleys picking vegetables on the outdoor market, a row of geese walking on the side of a country dirt road, two men playing table tennis with their shirts off in the hot sunshine, someone holding an old photograph to compare the past and present view of a village street, the group of travellers in a contemporary mini-van on their way from Berlin to Gdańsk, and the like.

First photographed, those images were later on put on paper with the help of crayons in a simplified almost naïve and infantile convention. The whole process of drawing them has been filmed. The final work is thus a video showing the process of creation line by line, choice by choice. Sometimes the artist hesitates a bit before he makes a final decision about a colour he wants to use, sometimes he corrects minor details, sometimes ponders if the image is already complete, or if it requires some more intervention. He himself remains hidden behind the camera, only his hands can be observed in action. As much as anecdotal and everyday detail-oriented this work is, it is no longer so much the content, as the creative process itself that is in focus here. The artist remains behind the scenes, however he reverses the logical course of artistic creation to highlight the self-referential aspect of his work. The sketching becomes here the final action in the whole creative process, and not – as usual – the first stage. Nowadays it is the digital camera which allows to grasp the fleeting impression. No longer does the artist have to stop on his way with a piece of paper and pencil to catch the moment. He can come back to it whenever he wants, select out of many the satisfactory image taken on the road, and work on it in the comfort of his studio. The consciousness of the reverse order of this process deepens the attention given to the work of art that is being created. It also makes the artist independent of the spatial and temporal conditions potentially influencing his working process.

This self-awareness is further explored in the sound piece by Małgorzata Żerwe. Created in a convention of a mockumentary, the reportage plays with the sense of temporality and reality. Making use of the real-time contemporary recordings from the journey, the artist mingles them with fragments of text based on Chodowiecki's travel journal, however fictionalized and narrated by a protagonist who personifies Chodowiecki's horse. This undoubtedly humorous approach, not only provides an unexpected and enjoyable metaphor of the dialogue between the past and the present, but also reflects in a way the specificity of Chodowiecki's written observations, in which he concentrated on marginal minor details concerning the toils of travel, the well-being of his horse and their everyday diet, which – as researchers agree – made his notes rather of inferior value in comparison to his drawings³⁹. At the same time, they often cannot be denied a certain sense of humour and satire which are pursued in Żerwe's work as well. So are occasional compassion and empathy, as well as close investigation of details, resulting from personal involvement in the interaction with people accidentally encountered on the road.

The last part of the project was a literary journal written during the four August days' travel by Barbara Piórkowska. It follows the traditional rules characteristic of the *genre* – its narration is dynamic, impression-based, concise and documentary, arranged according to chronological and linear order of events and visited places. There is no climax or suspense developed. Each day brings new observations which need to be noted down without regard to how exciting or revealing they are, in order to keep the regime of the journal. The author makes use of numerous self-reflexive remarks, some of them referring directly to Chodowiecki's experience, at times incorporating comparative quotes, other times regretting that the contemporary reader has no access to more extensive reflections on particular themes that Chodowiecki failed to share jotting his short impressions down in haste.

The final outcome of this trip, apart from works of art forming an interdisciplinary entity, was an exhibition arranged in the future seat of the formerly-mentioned Daniel Chodowiecki and Günter Grass

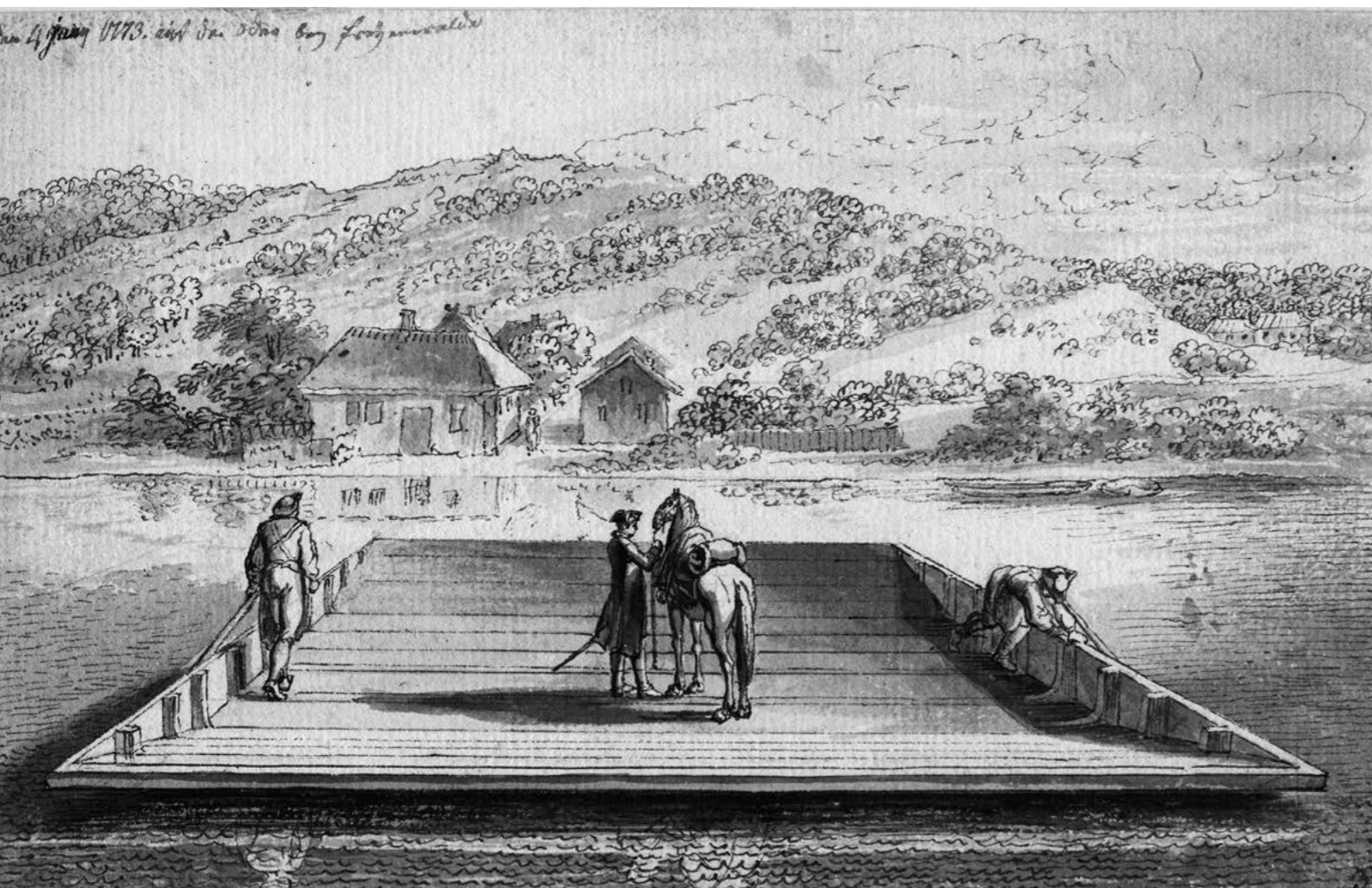


6. "From Berlin to Gdańsk", exhibition detail. Photo and courtesy of: M. Salamon

House in Gdańsk. The exhibition design was purposefully auto-thematic as well. The designers – Patrycja Orzechowska and Agnieszka Jelnicka – proposed a self-referential solution based on an idea of a travelling exhibition. Compact, light, easy to assemble and disassemble, flexible to arrange, the exhibition does not follow any restricted, superimposed order, taking the contemporary visitors' habits into account, allowing them to make their own choices as to the amount of time and attention they wish to devote to each piece, providing them with enough freedom to choose relevant individual frames of reception⁴⁰. The play between past and presence constitutes another way to activate the viewers by slightly temporally disorienting them. It is reinforced by the selection of exhibition furniture which constitutes a mixture of antiquities and modern solutions. The dominant image drawn by Chodowiecki included in the exhi-

³⁹ See I. Turnau, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

⁴⁰ See M. Bal, *Exposing the Public*, [in:] *A Companion to Museum Studies*, ed. Sh. Macdonald, Malden [Massachusetts] 2006, p. 535.



7. D. N. Chodowiecki, *Crossing the Oder* (4 VI 1773), ink and wash, 10,1 × 15,9. Akademie der Künste, Berlin, Kunstsammlung, inv. no. Chodowiecki 3. Photo: AdK

bition, vastly enlarged and printed as wallpaper, presents him and his horse crossing the river Oder on a ferry [fig. 7]. It marks the symbolic passage made by the 18th century artist and restaged by the group of 21st century artists. Furthermore, taking historical events into account, it embodies the changing geographical and political borders that developed over the last 250 years between Poland and Prussia/Germany. This in turn may entail a whole array of connotations interpreted on the level of sociological and cultural relations between the two nations, based on the mental and political significance of that border and the possibility of its passage.

Regarding the experiment described above in a wider than purely artistic sense, its cultural and sociological functions seem quite prominent. Its role in the construction and reinforcement of identity discourse has been already emphasised. Its form seems to be somehow connected with Hippolyte Taine's statement that artists and their art are the product of their own times and society⁴¹. The contemporary times are reflected first of all by the interdisciplinary approach and diverse techniques used by the artists to provide a comprehensive contemporary version of Chodowiecki's journal. In a way – together with the autotelic exhibition design, it reflects a present idea of the historical *Gesamtkunstwerk*. Sociologically speaking, the project significantly reflects the fluid post-modern reality characterised by the overall impression of instability and transience⁴² – the artists rarely take time to stop and create their works *in situ*, they rather register the fleeting impressions and later on project them onto the final work. Curiously, experiments with new media give them the opportunity to blur the borders between the past and the presence, to travel in time, to play roles, to simulate and overlap the actual and virtual realities⁴³. Those techniques bear serious cognitive values, stimulating imagination and instigating a better process of (self)understanding, making the past no longer a foreign country⁴⁴. It in fact becomes a vital and relevant part of contemporary cultural identity, based on recognized and personalized microworlds, characterised by identified values and features represented by the societies of the past and the present⁴⁵.

Thus, it is indeed true that contemporary art has the power to simulate the world that is seemingly gone in order to create senses⁴⁶ and in this way make the uprooting within a particular identity vision possible⁴⁷. It does so by drawing freely and creatively from the rich repertory of both historical and contemporary tools and means, looking for the way to integrate various aspects and needs into a common structure of relations and meanings. Thus, creating an imaginative and illusory connection, not only offers an attractive and interesting artistic heterotopy with countless creative possibilities, but also provides a compensatory space similar to imaginative hyperreality, on top of which contemporary sociological and cultural structures referring to memory and identity issues can be constructed⁴⁸. Hence, Chodowiecki, re-discovered and re-addressed within the 21st century framework, offered his own personal microhistory as a pretext to discuss the big questions of heritage, memory, identity and the sense of belonging through the lenses of individual and subjective experience based on everyday mundane reality⁴⁹.

⁴¹ See M. Golka, *Socjologia sztuki*, Warszawa 2008, p. 231.

⁴² See Z. Bauman, *Płynne czasy. Życie w epoce niepewności*, transl. M. Żakowski, Warszawa 2007, p. 7.

⁴³ See *idem*, *Przedmowa*, [in:] W. J. Burszta, W. Kuligowski, *Dlaczego kościotrup nie wstaje. Ponowoczesne pejzaże kultury*, Warszawa 1999, p. 7.

⁴⁴ See *idem*, *Słuchając przeszłości, rozmawiając z przeszłością*, transl. R. F. Muniak, [in:] Z. Bauman, *Między chwilą a pięknem. O sztuce w rozpedzonym świecie*, Łódź 2010, p. 79.

⁴⁵ See M. Golka, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

⁴⁶ See Z. Bauman, *O znaczeniu sztuki i sztuce znaczenia myśli parę*, [in:] *Awangarda w perspektywie postmodernizmu*, ed. G. Dziamski, Poznań 1996, p. 132.

⁴⁷ See *idem*, *Ponowoczesność, czyli o niemożliwości awangardy*, [in:] *Awangarda...*, p. 24.

⁴⁸ See E. Rewers, *Rabusie, wędrowcy i symulatorzy*, [in:] *Awangarda...*, p. 140.

⁴⁹ See R. Beier-de Haan, *Re-staging Histories and Identities*, [in:] *A Companion...*, p. 187.

Słowa kluczowe

Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, dziennik podróży, Gdańsk, Berlin, pamięć, tożsamość kulturowa

Keywords

Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki, travel journal, Gdańsk, Berlin, memory, cultural identity

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Summary

ANNA SCHULTZ (Akademie der Künste, Berlin), MARTA WRÓBLEWSKA (University of Gdansk) / Time travel from Berlin to Gdańsk. Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki's 18th century journey revisited – contemporary renderings and interpretations

Daniel Nikolaus Chodowiecki's journey on horseback from Berlin to his hometown Danzig in 1773 is well documented through a diary and a carefully constructed series of more than 100 drawings. These give valuable insights into the artist's observations and serve as rare documents of a city and landscape which was lost and in part reconstructed. As a man of diverse cultural roots, Chodowiecki also attempted to position himself within a rapidly changing political framework and, through his images, addressed questions of cultural affiliations and identity. In this, he was as much a forbearer of European ideals, as an inspiration and starting point for a group of Polish artists who in 2018 embarked on a journey in the his footsteps and, reflecting on Chodowiecki's journal and his drawings, created works, which underline the value of the source materials, whilst picking up on issues such as the transient role of cultural identity, the changing face of travel in a more global yet deeply divided society, or issues of displacement – which remain equally relevant to this day.