

## The Internationalization of Art Historiography in the Polish People's Republic. The case of Jan Białostocki

There exists in the History of Art an imaginary community—an intellectual network whose collaboration extends beyond national borders. A kind of ‘Republic of Letters’, or rather, a ‘Republic of Scholars’, forged through correspondence, exchanges of publications, research trips, visits to colleagues, and participation in scientific meetings. The Polish art historian Jan Białostocki (1921–1988) belonged to this network during the Cold War Years. Białostocki was an example of the intelligentsia who, during the Polish People’s Republic, maintained intensive contact with other historiographical traditions. He traveled abroad thanks to scholarships from state bodies, invitations from scientific institutions, and his positions in international organizations. This intense international activity, primarily focused on the Western bloc, began in the Stalinist era and lasted shortly before his death, spanning various periods of Communist Poland, each marked by distinct political, economic, and social developments.

While this subject is crucial for understanding intellectual connections and genealogies, the circulation of ideas and scholars, and the cultural transfers that significantly shaped 20th-century art-historical scholarship, has not yet been thoroughly studied—largely because many primary sources were long believed to have been destroyed. This project is based on those materials which fortunately exist, and they provide an invaluable starting point for rethinking and exploring Białostocki’s international activities in greater depth. Accordingly, the project will focus on three main axes: the means of internationalization of Polish art historiography, integration into and participation in the international intellectual community, and the impact of these processes on the development of art-historical scholarship both locally and internationally.

This project is situated within the subfield of intellectual history, or the history of intellectuals, and aims to provide an analysis that moves beyond the history of ideas by situating those ideas and its author within the political, social, and cultural context that shaped intellectual life. Białostocki’s trajectory and work will therefore be examined in relation to the historical context, state-controlled scientific institutions, relations with power structures, and the international dimension. The research will be based on comprehensive source work in archives in Poland and abroad, qualitative analysis of textual sources, and the critical assessment of both oral and written testimonies.

To implement the project, a Research Team will be established, consisting of the Principal Investigator and a Postdoctoral Researcher. The work plan will be organized into Work Packages, each aligned with three main objectives: archival and bibliographical research; dissemination of results through the publication of articles in peer-reviewed journals; and the development of scientific activities with dissemination actions, including participation in international conferences and the organization of a research seminar and an international workshop.

This project will embed Polish art-historical scholarship within a broader intellectual landscape of the Cold War, thereby contributing to the decentralization of the predominantly Western-centered narrative of the discipline’s history. It will also offer new insights into the transnational history of art history, as the intellectual geography of the postwar period and the resulting international scholarly community played a decisive role in shaping the discipline and its institutionalization.