

## The Backstage View: A Mundane History of Collecting (Poznań, 26–27 Oct 23)

Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Oct 26–27, 2023

Deadline: Apr 16, 2023

Camilla Murgia; Michał Mencfel

The Backstage View: A Mundane History of Collecting (1600-1918).

After more than half a century of intense scientific exploration, resulting in hundreds of in-depth studies, the history of collections has established itself as one of the privileged fields of research in humanities. Various issues such as the provenance of objects in collections; ways in which these objects have been ordered, arranged, and displayed; rooms and buildings in which they have been kept and exhibited; narratives beyond objects and collections; biographies of collectors; social practices connected with collections, etc. have been versatily investigated. Consequently, collecting, fascinating in its own right, proved also to be a sensitive indicator of broad cultural and social phenomena connected with artistic, scientific, philosophical, societal, and political movements.

Indeed, recent research has shown how the art market has been crucial to the history of collections in specific cultural contexts that have undergone a series of exchanges and openings linking different economic elements and realities (Brill's *Studies in the History of Collecting & Art Markets*). Moreover, attention has been paid to the circulation of works of art from the perspective of collecting strategies (Art Markets, Agents and Collectors: *Collecting Strategies in Europe and the United States 1550-1950*, ed. by Adriana Turpin and Susan Bracken, 2021), and of provenances (Study of Collecting and Provenance & the Getty Provenance Index).

Collecting, however, also relies on a great number of less noble and less sophisticated but indispensable practices. These include negotiating with artists and dealers, observing (or escaping) the formalities, paying (or avoiding paying) customs fees, transporting, and securing the collectables, restoring, and framing the works of art, among others. The present call for contributions aims to invite proposals for papers focusing on this everyday – somewhat down-to-earth and mundane – side of collecting. What about this background, consisting of daily actions, practical skills, and made-to-measure resolutions, that contributes to the constitution of collections and the act of collecting itself? How does this meticulous, essential, and somehow “invisible” infrastructure enable the purchase, conditioning, sale, and exchange of artwork?

This conference aims to explore the various aspects regarding the mundane site of the history of collecting. We intend to question the multitude of logistic, administrative, organisational, and managerial practices that contribute to the act of collecting and how they affect selling and buying artwork. We are interested in identifying and studying the elements that mark out the diverse and versatile collecting apparatuses in specific cultural, social, and economic realities, both private and

public. Changes in issues, paradigms, and availability are at the heart of our study.

We invite papers investigating (but not limited to) issues such as:

- Negotiations with sellers and agents
- Transporting and securing collectables
- The administrative and legal framework for collecting
- Economic practices stemmed from custom and custom relations
- Transnational actions and exchanges leading to collecting practices
- Organisation, development, and management of stocks and artwork repositories
- Compilation and management of stock books and any kind of register (from private to public)
- Supporting actors who performed a sometimes invisible but nevertheless important role in collecting practices

The organisers will offer a financial contribution to accommodation costs.

For further information please visit The Backstage View Conference | Wydział Nauk o Sztuce (amu.edu.pl).

Proposals (up to 250 words), along with a short biography (up to 200 words), have to be sent to mmencfel@amu.edu.pl and camilla.murgia@unil.ch by April 16th, 2023.

Convenors: Michał Mencfel, Adam Mickiewicz University Poznań, Camilla Murgia, Université de Lausanne.

Reference:

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