Medieval Art in Silesia (Wrocław, 3-5 Dec 26)

Wrocław, Poland, Dec 3–05, 2026
Deadline: Jun 28, 2026

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Old Topics, New Perspectives.

A century ago, on 1 August 1926, the Four Domes Pavilion hosted the most extensive exhibition of Silesian medieval art ever held, organised by the Museum der bildenden Künste in what was then Breslau. The exhibition catalogue, published three years later by Heinz Braune and Erich Wiese under the title "Schlesische Malerei und Plastik des Mittelalters", became a foundational point of reference for successive generations of scholars working on Silesian art. For decades, it provided the essential framework for the region's medieval artistic production, both chronologically and workshop-based. To mark the centenary of both the exhibition and its catalogue, we intend to commemorate this milestone with an academic conference held alongside a special exhibition organised by the National Museum in Wrocław. The Wrocław exhibition of 2026 (running from 31 July to 30 December 2026) will form part of a triptych of Polish exhibitions collectively entitled Gothic in Poland (Wrocław, Poznań, and Kraków).

This conference is intended to focus primarily upon the art of medieval Silesia with due regard for its entanglement in the broader historical, artistic, political, and social currents of Central Europe and the wider continent. Within these regional and supra-regional frameworks, the conference is guided by two principal objectives. The first is to present new research findings while also taking stock of the considerable achievements of scholars and museum professionals to date. This encompasses the classification and presentation of the Gothic artworks, the formulation of attributional proposals, formal and stylistic analyses, and the situating of Silesian art within both its immediate local context and its wider European milieu. We do not consider these concerns to have lost their force; on the contrary, we are persuaded that, equipped with a heightened awareness of the challenges and with the methodological innovations developed in recent decades, it is possible to revisit these questions in a manner that is both critically informed and attuned to contemporary scholarship. The second objective is to showcase research and interpretative approaches that draw upon newer and emerging methodological frameworks. These include, among others, studies of (new) materiality, the digital humanities, the environmental and ecological humanities, gender studies, and the application of advanced technologies to the examination of artworks' materials and techniques. By bringing these perspectives into dialogue, the conference seeks to foster an international forum for reflection on the future of research into Silesian and Central European art – particularly with regard to shifting paradigms and new directions in academic enquiry, curatorship, exhibition practice, and conservation.

We would particularly welcome submissions addressing the following areas:

- The makers of medieval painting and sculpture in Silesia and Central Europe: questions of identity and anonymity, patterns of migration, sources of inspiration, and the organisation of workshops both within and beyond guild structures;
- Medieval art in Silesia: historical and contemporary attributions, alternative approaches, and proposals for new classification systems.
- The medieval art in Silesia in relation to that of neighbouring and more distant European regions: formal, stylistic, and comparative studies, research in iconography and iconology, pursued both within traditional frameworks and through attempts at renewed interpretation;
- The materials and materialities of medieval painting and sculpture in Silesia and Central Europe;
- The “afterlives” of medieval artworks, and critical reflections upon the history of their study, display, musealisation, conservation, and protection across the centuries, both in Silesia and within the broader Central European context;
- Digital humanities approaches and initiatives for sharing knowledge of medieval art in Central Europe – achievements so far and future prospects.

Please submit a ca. 300-word abstract for a 20-minute paper, with a title, your affiliation, and a short biographical summary to agnieszka.patala@uwr.edu.pl by 28 June 2026.
Selected papers will be confirmed by early July 2026.

Organisers: The National Museum in Wrocław (Director: Piotr Oszczanowski); Institute of Art History, University of Wrocław (Romuald Kaczmarek, Agnieszka Patała, Jacek Witkowski)

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