

10. Summary

The Print Collection of Jan Ponętowski at the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow

In 1592, Jan Ponętowski, a Polish nobleman who had studied at the University of Krakow, served as a protonotary apostolic, and held the position of abbot at the Premonstratensian Monastery in Hradisko near Olomouc, generously donated his extensive collection of books, prints, paintings, tapestries, and other precious objects to his Alma Mater. This donation, which remains partially preserved today, resides at the Jagiellonian Library in Krakow. The focal point of this study has been to examine a remarkable portion of this collection: Ponętowski's collection of prints.

The collection housed at the Jagiellonian Library includes 12 print albums, three printed friezes, and prints pasted into books, comprising over 1,000 works in total. Notably, this collection stands out as one of the few early modern print collections that has not undergone extensive enhancement or later re-binding. Comparatively, Ponętowski's collection shares similarities with those of Philip II at the Escorial and Ferdinand II of Tyrol, Archduke of Austria, initially stored at Ambras Castle. However, unlike royal or ducal collections, Ponętowski's collection reflects the personal interests and activities of a Polish nobleman who also held significant Church positions. This kind of art collecting has not been adequately reflected in literature, as virtually no other complete 16th-century collections of this type have survived until today.

Understanding Jan Ponętowski's biography provides an essential context for appreciating his role as a collector. Archival sources have provided many details about the life of this nobleman from Łęczyca who, thanks to his brother Jakub's merits to the House of Habsburg, was appointed to the abbots' throne in Hradisko near Olomouc in 1577. After a decade, he was dismissed and returned to Krakow. The archival documents analysed in this study illuminate his activities in Moravia, the circumstances surrounding his appointment as abbot, his departure from Olomouc, and his life following the return to the Kingdom of Poland. The introductory chapter presents the abbot's biography, reflecting on his intellectual formation and interests in Church affairs and providing context for understanding him as a collector.

The meticulous analysis of the preserved works reveals Ponętowski's careful arrangement and thematic cohesion in collecting prints, shedding light on the late 16th-century process

of creating print albums. Several pages in the albums retain markings indicating the placement of prints in the quire or their early arrangement – thus providing a glimpse into the album arranging process and practical guidance for bookbinders. These markings, often positioned along the page edge, are frequently incomplete or cut off, explaining why so few are intact. The process was dynamic; alterations such as changes in numbering or the addition of prints occurred at various stages before binding. Album creation did not always end with binding; Ponętowski sometimes added prints, either affixed between existing sheets or, in rare cases, adhered to the verso of already bound prints. Secondary interventions, visibly occurring long after the albums were created, such as restorations, the cutting out, tearing, or pasting of prints, are most likely due to conservation efforts or instances of theft.

Undoubtedly, the arrangement of prints in Ponętowski's albums was deliberate not only in terms of assigning numbers to them in the initial stages of work, as evidenced by markings preserved on some pages, but also thematically. Sequences of prints in the albums, based on thematic and iconographic criteria, form a kind of narrative whose logic is, in most cases, clear, and authored by a compiler. While print publishers sometimes proposed specific arrangements through numbered series, Ponętowski's albums demonstrate that these suggestions were sometimes rejected in favour of his own, individual order. The method of organising the graphic collection in the abbot's albums exhibits typical features of late 16th-century print collecting, yet it also bears certain individual traits.

The analysis of the collection suggests that the creation of graphic albums resembled the production of a book, when the narrative relied on a sequence of themes or iconographic types. The titles assigned to the albums used popular metaphors such as mirror (*Speculum*), theatre (*Theatrum*), book (*Liber*), and model, figure, or image (*Typus*), similar to contemporary book titles in the fields of encyclopaedic or moral literature. These titles were either inked or stamped onto the album covers. While titling albums occurred in other collections, it was the book-like convention adopted by the abbot and his consistency in applying it to almost all volumes that made his collection exceptional compared to the known graphic collections from the late 16th century. It further emphasises the book-like creation process of a print album.

In Ponętowski's collection, prints with religious and moral themes clearly predominate in eight albums (*Typus Ecclesiae Catholicae*, *Theatrum Legis Divinae*, *Speculum Christianae Professionis*, *Liber Devotus Imaginum*, *Acta Apostolorum cum Iconibus*, *Liber Divinae Sapientiae*, *Vita Austera Religiosorum Sanctorum Patrum Heremitarum*, and *Theatrum Vitae Humanae*). These include narrative representations, devotional scenes, allegories, depictions of saints, and compositions related to Church teachings. Such themes are often supplemented in albums with numerous graphic series depicting personifications of virtues, senses, times of day, seasons, continents, elements, temperaments, planets, and zodiac signs. One can also find individual portraits, maps, depictions of historical events, or compositions related

to contemporary events, with these inclusions typically explained in the context of the sequence of prints in which they are included.

Historical themes, especially depictions of wars and portraits, dominate the remaining albums in Ponętowski's collection. Additionally, graphic friezes depicting the funeral processions of the Habsburgs – Charles V in 1558 and Ferdinand I in 1565 – and the *Triumphal Procession after the Coronation of Charles V in Bologna* in 1530 can also be categorised as prints illustrating historical events. Depictions of the ancient and contemporary monuments of Rome, mainly found in the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae* album, constitute a significant part of Ponętowski's collection. Mythological scenes are notably rare in his albums, indicating that mythology did not hold substantial importance as an independent theme for the collector or in his selections for the University of Krakow.

Ponętowski clearly prioritised subject matter over artistic quality. This prioritisation is visible not only in the albums. When affixing prints to the pastedowns of his missals, the abbot considered their thematic correspondence with the type and content of those books. Notably, three prints on these pastedowns were printed on silk, a choice that, from a bibliophile's perspective, would have complemented the missals' luxurious velvet bindings.

The review of the collection, however, indicates that the abbot did not strictly seek prints in flawless condition. His collection originally included stained, creased, and torn works that underwent supplementary and consolidating treatments during the creation of the albums. Additionally, many impressions in his collection are from worn plates, showing signs of damage, scratches, and retouching. Accordingly, in rare instances, prints in Ponętowski's albums are poorly legible.

Nevertheless, most of Ponętowski's collection consists of prints of high artistic quality, sourced from renowned Netherlandish, Italian, and German publishers of the era, including Philips Galle, Antonio Lafreri, Sadeliers, Hieronymus Cock and Volcxken Diericx, Frans Hogenberg, Gerard de Jode. Most of his prints are works of contemporary artists such as Maarten de Vos, Maarten van Heemskerck, Jan van der Straet, Philips Galle, Aegidius (I), Johannes (I) and Raphael (I) Sadeler; Adriaen and Hans Collaert; Johannes, Hieronymus and Anton Wierix; Frans Hogenberg, Gaspare Osello, and Hendrick Goltzius.

Ponętowski bought what was accessible on the market at that time from the stocks of prolific publishers. Although the reconstruction of the actual route by which prints reached him is not possible, it is clear that Ponętowski assembled most of his prints during his tenure as an abbot near Olomouc (1577–1587), where most of his albums were also bound. Only two were bound in Krakow in the late 1580s or early 1590s. These timeframes for the founding of Ponętowski's collection as well as dates impressed on several bindings (namely 1582 and 1586) allow for more precise dating of many prints or their later states. This is especially true for the works of Johannes and Hieronymus Wierix and the dating of the creation of the standardised *Speculum Romanae Magnificeniae* albums. Thanks to the copies

in Ponętowski's collection, it has also been revealed that the friezes depicting the *Triumphal Procession after the Coronation of Charles V in Bologna in 1530* and the *Funeral Procession of Charles V in Brussels in 1558* were already being printed and sold together in the 1570s or 1580s. This was likely facilitated by a single publisher, and it was only later that these plates came into the possession of Hendrik Hondius.

The study clearly demonstrates that while building his collection of art and books and donating it to the University of Krakow in 1592, Ponętowski consciously crafted his image as an eminent, wealthy, and broad-minded man. Regardless of whether or not this image fully reflected reality, the analysis of Jan Ponętowski's preserved collection, in its entirety and its individual parts, provides insights into the broader, hitherto insufficiently recognised processes of creating, organising, and understanding graphic arts collections in late 16th-century Europe.