

HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL,  
EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

VOL. I

Polish Institute of World Art Studies  
(conjoint former Polish Society of Oriental Art and Society of Modern Art in Toruń)

&

Department of History of Modern Art, Faculty of Fine Art,  
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

Jubilee International Conference  
celebrating  
The 200th Anniversary of the First Lecture on the History of Art  
at Vilna / Vilnius University

(15 September 1810)

The Centre of Contemporary Art  
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Polish Institute of World Art Studies  
&  
Department of History of Modern Art, Faculty of Fine Art,  
Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń

# **HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE**

**VOL. I**

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**Kup ksi k**

# Spis treści



The genesis of art history as a science





# HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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Jerzy Malinowski  
Nicolaus Copernicus University, Torun

## The Art History at the Ancient Vilna / Wilno / Vilnius University and its Tradition

On September 15, 1810, professor of “etching and the literature of fine arts” Joseph (Józef) Saunders (London 1773–Krzemieniec / Kremenets on Volhynia 1854) delivered the first lecture on the history of art at the Faculty of Literature and Art of Vilna University, entitled *Discours sur l'influence ou l'utilité des arts imitatifs*, published in Polish under the title *O wpływie i użytku sztuk naśladowniczych* in “Pamiętnik Magnetyczny Wileński” (“Vilna Magnetic Diary”) in 1816<sup>1</sup>. The bicentenary of the first university lecture on the history of art at the Vilna University is simultaneously the bicentenary of research into art in Central- Eastern Europe.

The tradition of the Vilna University was inherited in Poland by the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Torun and the Lublin Catholic University, while in Lithuania by the Vilnius University, the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas and the Academy of Fine Arts in Vilnius.

This important anniversary evokes reflection both on the complicated past of the history of art and on its present state in this part of Europe, the region which after the October Revolution and then World War Two was separated from the other part of the continent by a wall.

After 1989, the official, politically rationed links among the countries of the former Eastern Bloc and the republics of the Soviet Union which had gained their independence, were weakened. The communities of art historians researching their own tradition, no longer subjected to the pressure of censorship, often shut themselves off within the boundaries of their own national cultures.

In our wish to meet the demand for breaking barriers, making contacts, and starting international cooperation, together with colleagues from Lithuania, historically so close to Poland, we decided to organize a conference and prepare this volume which can help to pave the way for cooperation and understanding across the borders that are finally opening.

The volume is devoted to the past of art history as a scientific discipline and its contribution to creating the national and aesthetic identity of the countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the majority of which were deprived of independence and subordinated to the partitioning nations in the 19th century, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century subjected to the pressure of totalitarian states. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these nations were often united in their fight for independence and democratic civic rights. Research, as well as providing patronage to artistic heritage, became an important element of

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<sup>1</sup> Saunders (2010).

creating national cultures. It began from the interest in antiquity typical in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and expanded to establishing of institutions of culture and learning (scientific societies, art schools, museums, periodicals), and to creating university-based history of art. The scope of the volume also includes national minorities, such as Jews, Armenians, and Tatars.

Co-authors of the volume undertook an internationally-based discussion of many new topics relating to the history of art, in this way broadening the theme of the valuable first publication *Die Kunsthistoriographien in Ostmitteleuropa und der nationale Diskurs* (2004)<sup>2</sup>. I hope this will create the opportunity to develop research which will reach across the boundaries of particular communities, and the borders of countries, and establish regional cooperation.

The first lectures on art history by Johann Dominik (Dominicus) Fiorillo took place as early as the 1780s at the University of Göttingen<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the German scholar became Full Professor in Art History as late as 1813, that is, three years after Saunders' nomination. Both Fiorillo and Eduard d'Alenton, who was the founder of the chair of art history at the University of Bonn in 1822, were artists, similarly to Saunders. October 1810, one month after Professor Saunders' first lecture in Vilna, Professor Aloys Hirt was nominated to the post of Full Professor of "theory and history of drawing arts" at the Humboldt University in Berlin<sup>4</sup>. In 1830, the Chair of Art History was opened at the Prince Albert Hohenzollern University in Königsberg with Professor August Hagen as its head. It is worth remembering that Königsberg, was not far from Vilna and Toruń. The old Prince Albert Hohenzollern University was created in 1540, which made it the second university after the Cracow Jagiellonian University in the Kingdom of Poland, one that preceded the Vilna University by 29 years.

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The tradition of the Vilna University goes back to 1579, when Stefan Batory (Stephen Báthory), King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania issued the

foundation act transforming the Jesuit College (founded in 1570) into Vilna Academy. It was the only university in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and one of three in the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth – the others being Cracow Academy (later Jagiellonian University, established in 1364) and the Jesuit Lwow Academy (later Lwow University, created in 1661). When the Jesuit order was dissolved (1773), the Commission of National Education transformed Vilna Academy into the Main School of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the third partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Russian authorities changed the name of the university to the Main School of Vilna, and in 1795 to the Imperial University of Vilna. Prince Adam Jerzy Czartoryski became its Curator then, and together with Rector Jan Śniadecki, they carried out the reform of the university. Polish was the language of instruction, while foreign professors would give their lectures in French. The university exerted influence on the lands of the present-day Belarus, Lithuania, and partly Latvia, as well as Ukraine – that is the area which was part of the so-called Vilna District of Education.

Architecture was taught throughout the period of existence of the university. 1793 saw the establishment of the Chair of Architecture at the Faculty of Physical and Mathematical Sciences. Its head was the well-known architect, Professor Wawrzyniec Gucewicz and subsequently: Michał Szulc, Michał Kado, and Karol Podczaszyński.

At the end of 1797, the Chair of Drawing and Painting was set up. It was headed by the outstanding painter, Professor Franciszek Smuglewicz. Smuglewicz and Andrzej (André) Le Brun, Professor of Sculpture (since 1803), benefitted from the patronage of the last Polish King, Stanislas Augustus. From 1766 to 1795, the so-called "Malarnia", i.e. Painting Room, existed at the King's court. It was a group of workshops managed by the painter Marceli (Marcello) Bacciarelli, which educated artists. Smuglewicz, who was awarded the King's scholarship to study in Rome, ran a private school for painters since around 1785. Le Brun was the first court sculptor and also head of the sculpture workshop, the so-called Skulptornia. Chairs of Fine Arts became part of the Faculty of Literature and Liberated Arts. Smuglewicz underlined the importance of theoretical subjects in the new curriculum,

<sup>2</sup> Born, Janatková & Labuda (2004).

<sup>3</sup> Hölder (1997: I–XXIII); Middeldorf Kosegarten (1997); Schrapel (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Bredekamp, Labuda (2010).

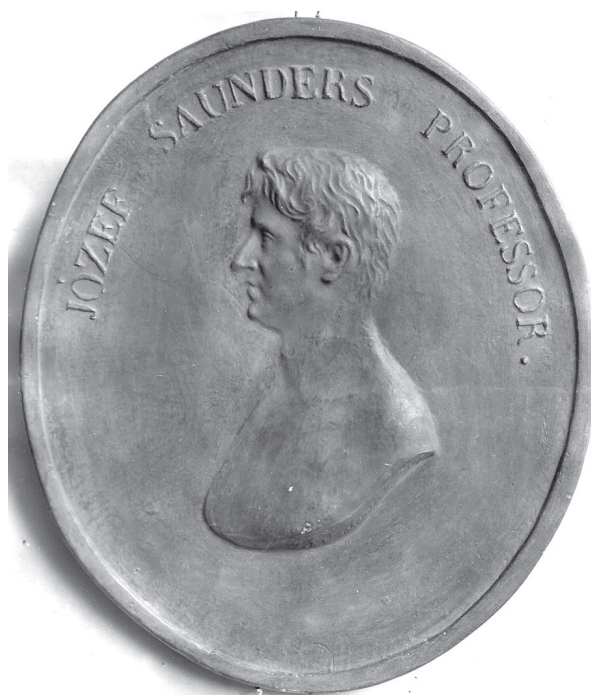
which was drawn up in 1803, and included in it the theory and history of art<sup>5</sup>.

Nevertheless, lectures in this field were undertaken only after Smuglewicz died, by his successor to the post of head of the Section of Fine Arts, Joseph (Józef) Saunders in 1810 (il. 1.1). He designed the curriculum for teaching the history of art at university level. The syllabus of his lectures included an overview of art from ancient Egypt, through Greece and Rome, to a broad analysis of contemporary European art, including that of Scandinavia, Poland, and Russia. He delivered lectures on extra-European, i.e. Indian, Persian and Jewish art, as well as English literature. In 1810, Saunders first used the term „Romantic” in Poland. He taught the Polish Romantic poets and painters who studied at his faculty.

Moreover, he published the text of the lecture *Wiadomości o życiu i dziełach Szymona Czechowicza*, (*On the Life and Work of Szymon Czechowicz*) – an outstanding late Baroque painter, who came from Cracow, was educated in Rome and was also active in Vilna). This was the first scientific article devoted to art on the lands of the former Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth (published in „Dziennik Wileński”, i.e. “The Vilna Daily” in 1815)<sup>6</sup>.

Saunders and the outstanding Warsaw patron and thinker about art, Stanisław Kostka Potocki, author of the universal history of art entitled *Winkelman Polski czyli sztuka u Dawnych* (*The Polish Winkelman or the Art of the Ancients*, Warsaw, 1815) were the first art historians in Poland and in Lithuania. Saunders’ students would write works on the history of art to complete their courses. In 1817, Wincenty Smokowski presented a work in French entitled *De style de la sculpture chez les Egyptiens et l’examen des causes qui ont influé sur uniformité de leur style* (*On the Egyptians’ Style of Sculpture and Research into the Reasons that Influenced the Uniformisation of Its Style*).

After Saunders’ retirement, the post of head of the Section for Fine Arts went to the well-known painter Jan Rustem, who was a pupil of a French painter acting in Poland Jean Pierre Norblin de la Gourdain and Bacciarelli in Warsaw, and who since 1798 had been a co-worker of Smuglewicz’s. The idea of educating artists at the university was



Il. 1.1. Wincenty Smokowski, Portrait of Professor Joseph Saunders

taken over from Vilna by Cracow Academy and the newly-opened Warsaw University.

After the fall of the November Uprising in 1832, the Vilna University was closed down. Until 1842 and 1844, respectively, two independent schools of higher education were active in Vilna: The Medical / Surgical Academy and the Ecclesiastical Academy, later transferred to St. Petersburg. University traditions survived in Vilna for many years. Art was taught by the university’s alumni – teachers of drawing at secondary schools (including the outstanding painter Kanuty Rusiecki). The Vilna press featured many articles about art. Attempts were made to set up art schools: in 1844 Kazimierz Jelski wanted to open a school of sculpture, and in 1856 Rusiecki, Jelski, and Wincenty Dmochowski tried to create a school of fine arts. Unfortunately, their efforts were unsuccessful.

Due to the repressions after the fall of the January Uprising in 1864, Polish artistic life came to a standstill. In 1866, Russian authorities created the School of Drawing, with the painter Ivan Trutniev as its head. Classes in the history of art were taught by the painter Ivan Rybakov. Among the students were the painters: Chaim Soutine, Lasar Segal, Bolesław Buyko, and the sculptor Jacques Lipchitz.

<sup>5</sup> Bartnicka 1971; Beauvois 2010.

<sup>6</sup> Saunders 2001.



In 1897, on the centenary of the foundation of the university art school, the historian and art critic Lucjan Uziębło organized the first exhibition of Vilna art. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, artistic life in Vilna centered around the outstanding painter Ferdynand Ruszczyc.

After Poland regained its independence, the university was reactivated and named after King Stefan Batory (Stephen Báthory). Ruszczyc became the founder and Dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts, which in accordance to tradition became a part of the University. It was one of the three academy of fine art centers in Poland, the others being the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow and in Warsaw. Between 1919–1921, lectures in aesthetics were given by Professor Władysław Tatarkiewicz. The Chair of Art History was founded in 1922. Its heads were Professors Jerzy Remer, Tadeusz Szydlowski and Marian Morelowski, while one of the lecturers was Stanisław Lorentz, later Director of the National Museum in Warsaw. The particular contribution of the Chair of Art History was to start research on the art of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the breaking out of World War II, Stefan Batory University, including its Faculty of Fine Arts, was closed down.

In the independent state of Lithuania, the history of art was taught at the Lithuanian University created in 1922 in Kaunas, and since 1930 called Vytautas Magnus University, at the Faculties of Humanities, as well as Theology and Philosophy by Professors Paulus Galaunė (the history of art in Lithuania, 1925–1939), Jurgis Baltrušaitis (universal history of art) and Jonas Grinius (aesthetics and the history of art). In 1939, the Faculty of Humanities was transferred to the new Lithuanian University in Vilna/Vilnius.

In 1939, the Lithuanian School of Fine Arts replaced the Polish Faculty of Fine Arts of Stefan Batory University. In 1959, its name was changed to the State Institute of Arts, and, in 1991, to the Academy of Fine Arts. In 1959, extramural courses in the history of art were started at the Chair of History and Theory of Art, and in 1970, full-time courses were created. Lectures in the history of art were given by: Tadas Adomonis, Jonas Umbrasas, Leonas Jasiulis, Pranas Gudynas and Nijolė Tumėnienė.

Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas was reopened in 1989. Studies in the history of art initially took place at the Faculty of Humanities. In 1991,

the Faculty of Arts was created, which in the years 2002–2008 functioned as the Institute of Arts. Its first Dean was Prof. Kęstutis Paulius Žygas from the USA, in the years 1992–2000 – Vladas Stauskas, and since 2000 – Vytautas Levandauskas. In 1997, the Chair of Art History was opened. Since the year 2000 it has been carrying out studies into the protection of cultural heritage. Its current Professors of Art History are Nijolė Lukšionytė and Vladas Stauskas.

In 1945, after Polish borders were changed, most of the employees of Stefan Batory University who had survived the war, moved to Toruń and started working at the Nicolaus Copernicus University, founded in August, 1945. The structure of the university included the Faculty of Fine Arts, which was a continuation of the pre-war Faculty from Vilna. The Chair of Study and Restoration of Artistic Works was set up at the Faculty. It was managed by Professor Jerzy Remer. A year later, the Chair of History of Art was set up at the Faculty of Humanities. In 1952, the two chairs were joined to open the Chair of Restoration of Artistic Works and Museology with a Department of History of Art. In 1969, the name of the Chair was changed to Institute of Study and Restoration of Artistic Works. Professors of Art History, Museology and Conservation were: Kazimierz Malinowski, Jadwiga Puciata-Pawłowska, Zbigniew Hornung, Gwido Chmarzyński, Marian Kutner, Jerzy Łoziński, Jerzy Frycz, Zygmunt Kruszelnicki, Zygmunt Wążyński, Marian Arszynski, Jan Tajchman and Józef Poklewski. At present, the following departments belong to the Institute: the History of Medieval and Early Modern (Renaissance and Baroque) Art (Elżbieta Pilecka), the History of Modern Art (19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century) (Jerzy Malinowski), Preservation of Historical Monuments (Janusz Krawczyk), Museology (Tomasz de Rosset) and the Section of Architecture (Andrzej Majdowski), as well as the Section of Oriental Art (Jerzy Malinowski). In 1998, Professor Zygmunt Wążyński organized the Chair of Art History and Culture at the Faculty of History.

In the 1944/1945 academic year, other professors and lecturers of the Stephen Báthory University – Marian Morelowski, Rajmund Gostkowski and Piotr Bohdziewicz – organized studies in the history of art at the Lublin Catholic University. It is worth adding that the Lublin Catholic University was founded in 1919 by professors and alumni

of St. Petersburg Ecclesiastical Academy (originally created in Vilna). It was transferred to Lublin from St. Petersburg after the Academy had been closed down in that city by Bolsheviks. Personal continuity between the first Vilna University and the Lublin Catholic University had, therefore, been retained.

In 1996 and 1997, on the bicentenary of founding the Chair of Drawing and Painting at the Vilna University, a large exhibition entitled *Kształcenie artystyczne w Wilnie i jego tradycje* (*Art Education in Vilna/Vilnius and its Tradition*) was organized in Toruń and Vilnius by the Faculty of Fine Arts of Nicolaus Copernicus University and the Academy of Fine Arts of Vilnius<sup>7</sup>.

Thirteen years later, in 2010, together with the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas, we celebrated the anniversary of the birth of art history in Central-Eastern Europe by preparing the conference and the volume.

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<sup>7</sup> Malinowski, Woźniak & Janonienė 1996. On the history of art history in Poland: Labuda, Zawiasa-Staniszevska 1996; Malkiewicz 2005.



# HISTORY OF ART HISTORY IN CENTRAL, EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

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## Joseph Saunders: making of the biography (*historiography and sources*)

*Everything that man says or writes,  
everything he creates or touches  
can and must give information  
about him*<sup>1</sup>.

Marc Bloch

Studying the biography as an ego-text or as a narrative has become a popular trend in the era of postmodernism. However, the appeal of Joseph Saunders' biography (1773–1854) is due not to the current interest in methodological approaches but, first and foremost, to the need to restore Saunders' identity as an outstanding line engraver, a productive pedagogue and one of the first university professors of the history of art in Europe.

The concept of identification in this case means not only reconstructing the events and chronology of his life. Restoring the identity also means bringing out Saunders' individuality as an engraver and linking his vision of art with the cultural paradigms of the Enlightenment and with the turn from Neo-

classicism to Romanticism. It also presupposes the restoration of his biography as a wholesome structure that conveys the uniqueness of fate as concrete existence of man, and the creative path of this artist, whose masterful works remain unclaimed and partly even un-attributed in museums and libraries of the world, although they all have his signature.

Among the various circumstances that have led to this, one of the most important was the geo-cultural factor, which is clearly delineated in the biography of Saunders. Frequent changes of location largely predetermined the ways of his existence and the profile of his professional occupations. In St. Petersburg (1796–1810) he revealed himself as a master of book, portrait and reproduction engravings. In Vilna (now Vilnius; 1810–1818) the teaching at the University as a professor of engraving, history of art and English literature became most important to the artist. In Florence (from 1818) he reinstated himself once more as an engraver, creating a range of portraits marked with individual talent.

He moved there due to a severe chronic illness. In 1821 it forced him to retire from the University and stop his work as an engraver at the peak of his artistic strength. Prior to 1841, he appeared in Krzemieniec (now Kremenets, Ukraine), to which his family remaining in Vilna was linked. As a result, the biography of the master splits into several

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<sup>1</sup> This article is based on archival sources that were partially used by the author in the first study on Saunders – the chapter “Englishman Joseph Saunders: Petersburg engraver and Vilna professor” (in: Svirida 1999: 84–122), as well as on new materials that are included in the book on this master, which is being prepared for print. The volume of this article allows to a limited extent to cover the questions mentioned below, while making only the most essential references to the literature and sources.

periods, connected with different countries and cities, which for a long time prevented perceiving his figure as a whole. His archives became dispersed in different countries, affecting the state of the historiography of the artist. Until recently, the 'St. Petersburg Saunders' and 'the Vilna Saunders' existed separately, and his links with Florence and Krzemieniec, where he spent in total more than thirty years of his later life, went almost unnoticed.

The range of biographical sources connected with the figure of Joseph Saunders is vast. They vary in genre (documental and poetic, work-related and private) and differ in their type (direct and oblique), in their means of expression (textual and visual) and in their ways of presenting information – they are either autobiographical or come from the outside. Stages of the artist's life are covered by sources very unevenly. In certain instances they are even duplicated, due to the nature of documentation in the Russian system of education, whereas in relation to some periods they are completely absent. Saunders' first period in London (1773–1796) and his last in Krzemieniec (after 1841–1854) generate the need to resort to hypotheses.

Saunders himself highly valued biographical writings, and believed that they revealed the 'causes, which have led to the blossoming of talents'. One of the first names he included in the program for his course on English literature was Samuel Johnson, the author of the famous 10-volume *"Lives of the Poets"* (1779–1781). However, non-biographical sources also provide consistently interesting material, though they are not always straightforward. At the same time, they may serve to verify the direct source and allow the study to be introduced into a broader cultural context. Work on the restoration of Saunders' biography serves as an interesting example in all the mentioned cases.

### Historiography as a source of information and errors

The historiography of Saunders covers more than 200 years. In 1807, in a book on the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts the author, Heinrich Reimers, quoted the words of Gabriel François Doyen, professor of Paris and, later, St. Petersburg Academies, who expressed his high opinion of the young engraver and predicted him a brilliant future<sup>2</sup>. In the

years 1820–1840 the name of Saunders as a professor at Vilna University appreciated by his students appeared on the pages of Vilna journals. These included reviews of exhibitions of the university's art school, as well as memoir-like articles devoted to it, which were published after the closing of the University (1832).

In 1844, information about Saunders' works and some of the facts of his life were printed in the fundamental Dictionary by Nagler, already during the artist's lifetime<sup>3</sup>. However, there he was confused with his namesakes *John* and *George* Saunders (whether Saunders knew about this publication is not clear: at this point he was located in Krzemieniec, which had lost the role of 'Volhynia Athens', after the closing in 1833 of its famous lyceum created by Tadeusz Czacki. (il. 2.1) *John*, in particular, has been assumed to work in St. Petersburg, creating engravings for the Album of Hermitage pictures, and *George* has been attributed a long stay in Florence, as well as the engraved portraits of Antonio Canova (1820) and Bertel Thorvaldsen (1823). Each of his namesakes has also 'received' one of Joseph's reproduction engravings after the paintings of G. Schalken and F. Mieris from the Hermitage. While the name *George* did not frequently substitute for his own name of Joseph, the name *John* migrated to other dictionaries of artists<sup>4</sup> and has even been adopted into Polish academic literature, so that John Saunders became *Jan*<sup>5</sup>.

The portrait of Canova unquestionably belongs to Joseph Saunders<sup>6</sup>. (il. 2.2) The portrait of Thorvaldsen is signed *Cons: Gius: Saunders*, which can be deciphered as C[onsulente] Gius[eppe] Saunders<sup>7</sup>. The Italianate name is also shown on another engraving listed in Nagler's dictionary under George's name – *Madonna della Misericordia* from

<sup>3</sup> Nagler (1844: 115, 116 vol. XIV, 1845: 543 vol. XV).

<sup>4</sup> Par example: Redgrave (1874: 377).

<sup>5</sup> Bieliński (1899–1900: 756 vol. 2).

<sup>6</sup> This is evident from the engraved signature below the image, as well as in a letter from the artist to Adam Czartoryski, in which he requested permission from the prince to dedicate to him the portrait of the sculptor, and also a corresponding on the print of the portrait (the dedication was printed not on all copies), as well as a diploma, awarded to him by the Florentine and Roman Academies.

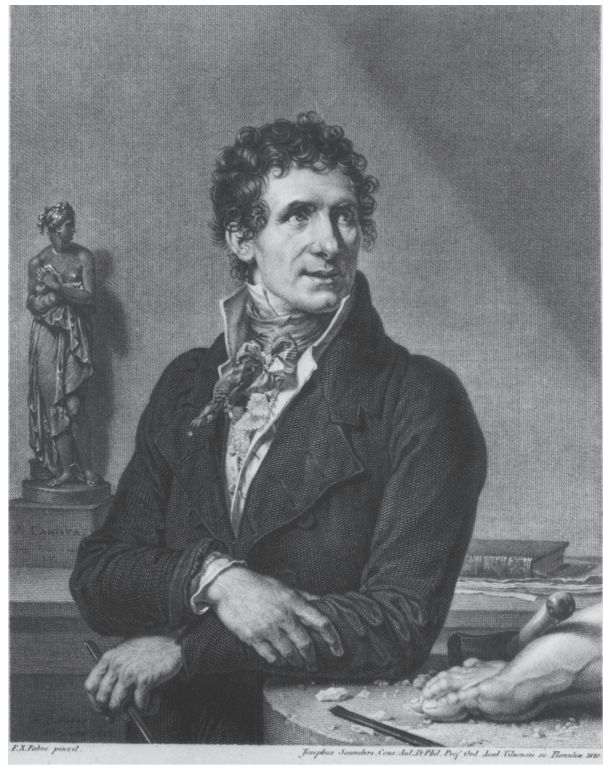
<sup>7</sup> Saunders had the title of *collegiate adviser* received from the university in 1821 together with a pension. The analogy between the names of *Giuseppe* and *Joseph* and a deciphering of the inscription has been suggested by Dr. A. Novikova. I am deeply grateful for the information on this portrait and a digital copy of it provided by Dr. M. Florian from the Thorvaldsen Museum (Copenhagen).

<sup>2</sup> Reimers (1807: 155).





Il. 2.1. Portrait of Tadeusz Czacki. Engraving by Joseph Saunders after the painting by Matteo Baccelli. Between 1810–1813. National Library, Warsaw



Il. 2.2. Portrait of Antonio Canova. Engraving by Joseph Saunders after the painting by Francois Xavier Fabre, 1820. Private collection. Moscow

the painting by Fra Bartolommeo. The author of the essay in Nagler's dictionary dates the engraving as 1835. If this is accurate, then it might be assumed that, by that time, Saunders, despite his illness, did not just continue engraving but also raised his skill and, having for the first time the opportunity to work on a religious theme, which has always been his aspiration, created his 'masterpiece'. Dmitri Rovinsky, an outstanding Russian collector and historian of engraving, wrote in his Dictionary about this work, attributing it to Joseph (although he knew of George as an alternative): 'An extremely large board ... the most capital and first-class engraving of Saunders'<sup>8</sup>. Owing to Rovinsky's Dictionary, a reproduction from this engraving is known. However, a definitive verification of Saunders' authorship would only be possible with the help of the print original, the search for which is in progress.

Misleading information has kept appearing until now. Although in Benezit's recent dictionary Saunders appears as *Joseph*, he is nevertheless mistakenly described there as a "painter of genre, portraits, and engraver", who studied with the Ital-

ian Pietro Longhi<sup>9</sup>. Due to all this (examples can be expanded), Saunders lost his identity and became one of a long line of artists of this surname, who occupied various art-related professions and who were well known in Holland from the 16<sup>th</sup> century and in London, from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The misinformation has for a long time remained a destructive factor and has not helped to raise an interest in this artist either during his lifetime or posthumously.

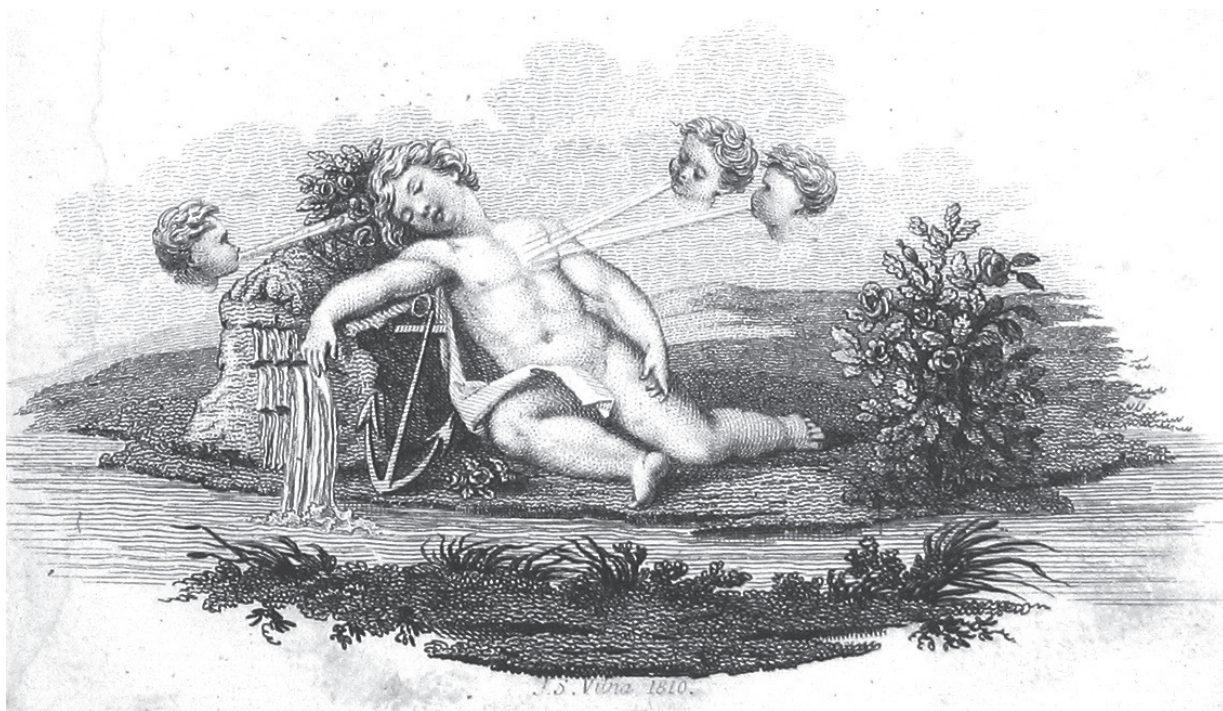
The situation in Polish and Russian historiography has been different from western European. In the years 1780–1870 Saunders' name entered Polish dictionaries of Kołaczkowski and Rastawiecki<sup>10</sup>. Edward Rastawiecki was the first to show the key dates of Saunders' biography, which were confirmed by further studies. Previously mentioned Dmitry Rovinsky described in his *Dictionary of Russian Engravers 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries* almost all of the main works of Joseph Saunders<sup>11</sup>. Owing to Rovinsky's collection (nowadays preserved in a number of museums in Moscow and St. Petersburg), these engravings are situated in corresponding folders, even though they never emerge from them and

<sup>9</sup> Benezit (1999:321) vol. XII.

<sup>10</sup> Kołaczkowski (1874: 53); Rastawiecki (1886: 262–263).

<sup>11</sup> Rovinskij (1895: 867–876 vol. 2).

<sup>8</sup> Rovinskij (1895: 872; 874 vol. 2).



Il. 2.3. *Cupid sleeping*. Vignette by Joseph Saunders to the Poetry by Anna Bunina. 1810. State Historical Library, Moscow

never find their way to exhibitions. Bibliophiles of the Silver Age in Russian Culture (late 19<sup>th</sup>–early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) enthusiastically appraised works by Saunders and described Saunders' book engravings as exquisite, charming and superb. Saunders has appeared in Russian dictionaries (A. Brockhaus – J. Efron), as well as in the publications of the materials of the St. Petersburg Academy of arts (S. N. Kondakov, P. N. Petrov).

Saunders' engravings first became available for public viewing at the large exhibition of Polish art in Lwow (now Lviv; 1894)<sup>12</sup> and then at a Russian book exhibition in St. Petersburg, where they held a prominent place (1914)<sup>13</sup>. However, since then Saunders' contribution to portrait engravings, book graphics has remained undervalued. He undoubtedly promoted the raising of the cultural standard of the Russian book of the Empire style and gave brilliant samples of the illumination of poetic and academic texts, including the book frontispiece and title pages. (il. 2.4, 2.5) One may assume that this could not have failed to be perceived by his junior contemporaries, who entered artistic life in the first decades of the nineteenth century.

The next exhibition was held in 1996 in Torun and Vilnius, in connection with the bicentennial of the creation of the art school at Vilna University<sup>14</sup>. It was very important in highlighting the heritage of Vilna's artistic school, including Saunders and his engraving class. Under the influence of this exhibition, several works by Saunders and his pupils were for the first time given a place in the exposition of Art Museum in Vilnius. However, engravings by Saunders did not appear in the exhibitions dedicated to the history of Russian, Polish or Lithuanian graphics, Russian or Polish artistic connections with Britain. Contemporary specialists in these areas have forgotten him.

As far as Saunders' pedagogical activity is concerned, Józef Bielinski's three-volume book dedicated to the history of Vilna University laid the foundations for the study of the professor's work and highly valued it<sup>15</sup>. The undertaking of this scientist was continued in the book on the history of Polish artistic education based on archival sources by Kalina Bartnicka<sup>16</sup>. This way, Saunders has become a real figure, even though he has not attained popularity among contemporary art historians.

<sup>12</sup> Bołoz-Antoniewicz (1894).

<sup>13</sup> Vereshchagin (1914).

<sup>14</sup> Malinowski, Woźniak & Janonienė (1996).

<sup>15</sup> Bieliński (1899–1900: vol. 1–3).

<sup>16</sup> Bartnicka (1971).





Il. 2.4. Diogenes in a barrel. Illustration to 'The key to the mysteries of nature' by Karl von Eckartshausen. St. Petersburg. Edition Schnorr. 1804 Engraving by Joseph Saunders after the drawing by Alexey Egoroff. Library of the University of Moscow



In the twentieth century Saunders' name appeared in the works of Lithuanian researchers, such as P. Galaunė, V. Drėma, actively examining their national past. They were later joined by V. Gasiunas and the Belarusian art historian L.N. Drobov. However, these studies only concern Saunders during his Vilna period. Complex historical relations between Lithuania, Poland and Russia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, which resulted in the changes of borders and authorities, also prevented the consideration of Saunders's biography in its unity.

At the same time, numerous language barriers have kept western authors from acquainting themselves with all this historiography. The fact that Zygmunt Batowski, in Thieme–Becker's Dictionary, highlighted the symbiosis of the Saunderses and clearly indicated that Joseph Saunders both worked in St. Petersburg and Vilna<sup>17</sup>, did not change the situation (as is already clear from the above). In the West, Saunders has practically never been “discovered” and still remains an unknown artist. The first and only author to give him certain attention was Anthony Cross. This well-known specialist in Russian-English cultural connections with reference to the information by D. Rovinsky outlined Saunders' St. Petersburg activity in the book on the Englishmen who lived and worked in eighteenth-century Russia<sup>18</sup>.

The task of reconstructing Saunders' multifaceted identity was partially solved in the previously mentioned book, which was dedicated to the movement of artists, their works, patrons and artistic ideas in the cultural space marked by the cities of St. Petersburg, Warsaw and Vilna<sup>19</sup>. In it, the Russian-Lithuanian-Polish connections during the time of Saunders' stay in Florence also found their place<sup>20</sup>.

## Facts and mysteries

Despite the availability of numerous documents related to Saunders, his biography has become, in some sense, a hermetic and, in many cases, distorted text. At the same time, it can also be characterized as an open text, which often becomes complemented by new information and with errors and inac-

curacies, too. In each case new questions arise. An important reason for this lies in the lack of basic information on the first period of Saunders' life, in London.

A whole range of dates in Saunders' biography, as well as the interpretation of its major events, for a long time remained unverified. Various dates have been suggested for Saunders' birth and death, his birth date fluctuating from ‘ca. 1750’ (Nagler) to 1773 (Kołaczkowski), and that of his death, from 1830 (Kołaczkowski) to 1875 (Benezit). The engraving on the monument of Saunders recently discovered at the former Basilian cemetery in Krzemieniec reads ‘1773–30 December 1853’. Yet even in this case problems arose. In the publication of these materials the day of the artist's death is indicated as the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 1854. Considering the time difference between the old and the new calendar (in C19 it constituted 12 days), the date should be marked as the eleventh of January 1854.

The year of Saunders' arrival in St. Petersburg also differs – it often figures as 1794, a date which has migrated from Rovinsky's Dictionary (in other cases it is 1794/1796 or only 1796). At the same time, Rovinsky ascribed to Saunders the title page of the *New Russian Songbook* with the initials JS edited in St. Petersburg in 1792 (this engraved sheet was published with the new title *Little Russian song 'On the bank, by the pond'* in Moscow in 1794). However, the stylistics of this engraving, decoratively quite overloaded, does not allow placing it among Saunders' works. It is difficult to consider it as belonging to the English school of engraving of the 1790s, too.

In the meantime, according to Saunders' own words, he had arrived in St. Petersburg on the invitation of Catherine II, passed on to him in 1796 by royal engraver James Fittler<sup>21</sup>. Saunders also mentioned that he had entered the service of the Hermitage ‘in the first year of the reign of the deceased Imperial Majesty Paul I’ (ascended the throne on 6 November 1796).<sup>22</sup> However, in the Petition to Paul I on the 21<sup>st</sup> of April 1800 the artist indicated that he ‘had the honour of working for approximately one year’ at the Hermitage, i.e. from 1799. The first two engravings by Saunders we know are

<sup>17</sup> Thieme – Becker (1939: 493).

<sup>18</sup> Cross (1997: 324–325).

<sup>19</sup> Svirida (1999: 84–122).

<sup>20</sup> Svirida (1999: 198–211).

<sup>21</sup> His relationship with Saunders, as well as his contacts with Russia are unknown.

<sup>22</sup> Russian State Historical Archives in St. Petersburg (Российский Государственный Исторический архив) F. 733, op. 62, ed. chr. 511, (French original, sheet 2).