

The Right of Art, the Principle of the Artist, the Imperative of the Scholar. The Example of a Romanesque Sculptor's Workshop in the Context of the Law of the Frame¹

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Abstract

The article addresses the topic of the significance of the law of the frame in academic discussion, the classification of artworks, and the pursuit to understand the formal aspects of artistic objects. It has been demonstrated how frequently and to what extent the law of the frame is included in cross-sectional publications on the history of art. The analysis has confirmed considerable importance of the said law in the teaching of the history of Romanesque art. Consequently, the basis of the considerations contained herein is a wide selection of, mostly, academic and popular academic syntheses, in which – inspired by the idea of the law of the frame and function – original observations were made already in the 1930s and in which the law of the frame was discussed to define and describe the form of artworks. The law of the frame has remained significant until today.

Keywords: Romanesque, sculpture, law of the frame, reception, methodology of teaching, introduction to art history, specialist terminology, historiography

Introduction

It was in *Philosophical (Athenaeum) Fragments* in 1798 that Friedrich von Schlegel described Johann Joachim Winckelmann's research as follows: "The systematic Winckelmann who read all the ancients as if they were a single author, who saw everything as a whole and concentrated all his powers on the Greeks, provided the first basis for a material knowledge of the ancients through his perception of the absolute difference between ancient and modern.

Only when the perspective and the conditions of the absolute identity of ancient and modern in the past, present, and future have been discovered will one be able to say that at least the contours of classical study have been laid bare and one can now proceed to methodical investigation."²

Proceeding with the explanation of the essence and reception of the law of the frame will be, to a certain extent, similar to the above description. The purpose is to create an image of this vastly popular and immensely important principle, a per-

¹ This article is an extended and footnoted version of the paper delivered at the *Novitas versus auctoritas w sztuce średniowiecznej* [*Novitas Versus Auctoritas in Mediaeval Art*] conference, organised by Ogólnopolskie Sympozjum Sekcji Mediawistycznej [The Polish Symposium of the Mediaeval Section] at Oddział Warszawski Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki [The Warsaw Branch of the Association of Art Historians], Warsaw, 25 September, 2021, and at the meeting of guests and scholarship recipients of Polska Misja Historyczna [The Polish Historical

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² SCHLEGEL, F.: *Philosophical Fragments*. Translated by P. FIRCHOW. Minneapolis 1991, p. 37, no 149. See also: WOOD, C. S.: *A History of Art History*, Princeton – Oxford 2021, p. 193.

ception which the readers may create for themselves today – primarily on the basis of synthetic literature published in the Polish language, attributing each concrete thought to the appropriate author, who is quoted, and preserve the richness of the diversity of observations and the attempts at defining this rule of art. Just as the above-cited early Romantic philosopher, a contemporary recipient of art has a possibly full picture of not only literature, but also the entirety of Romanesque art. The law of the frame constitutes a type of a compositional and formal discipline. Interestingly enough, it was Heinrich Wölfflin who displayed awareness of such features of art as he perceived the French sculpture, created from the 12th to the 15th-century, as a representative example of the evolution from discipline to freedom.³

In the first volume dedicated to Romanesque art, *The Art of the West in the Middle Ages*, Henry Focillon considers the qualities of monumental Romanesque sculpture. He points to peculiar and dialectical adjustment of figures – stemming from the technique, full of unfettered fantasy, and exceeding the idea of limitation – to the “architectural setting” – which is superior to the figures – as well as to its functions and its parts, the “surrounding frame” and “ornamental schemes.” Focillon remarks that the figures even become particular ornaments and architectural details. Unexpectedly, this artistic adjustment unleashes stacks of artistic energy or even dramatisation. Stone sculptures are governed by their own, non-mimetic, “harmony and proportions of an abstract system.” Their characteristic features include geometrisation, a broad scope of the iconography of representations, and frequent use of far-reaching deformities (see Figs. 1 – 3 and compare them to Fig. 4). Referring

to the context of different varieties of the application of the law of the frame, Focillon enumerates prominent sculptures in Saint-Benoît-sur-Loire, Aulnay, Souillac, and Autun.⁴ However, apart from the above summary of his definition, it is interesting to demonstrate how the law of the frame has been received in synthetic literature and how it is perceived by readers interested in the history of art.

Features of the law of the frame

The law of the frame is a novel and almost universal principle in Romanesque sculpture, whereas in Gothic art it is abandoned due to being considered a thing of the past (Fig. 4). It can be assumed that – in the Europe of the 11th and 12th centuries – the law of the frame was one of those artistic principles that spread spontaneously and were applied almost instinctively.⁵ Researchers frequently refer to the principles of the law of the frame, sometimes without naming a given rule and thus treating it as known and almost obvious. Hence, the law of the frame was probably implicitly applied by Romanesque artists. However, at the time, the application of the said law was not characterized by the features outlined by Focillon as late as in 1931. Romanesque sculpture is a phenomenon, due to its abundance and unusual formal qualities, which distinguished it from the sculpture of previous eras.⁶ Created on the basis of the law of the frame, Romanesque sculpture is organically related, and subordinate, to architecture. On the other hand, it is architecture that needs to reduce the severity of the blocks it is composed of by means of decorative art, monumental sculpture in particular.⁷

³ WÖLFFLIN, H.: *Podstawowe pojęcia historii sztuki: problem rozwoju stylu w sztuce nowożytnej*. Translated by D. HANULANKA. Gdańsk 2021, p. 198.

⁴ FOCILLON, H.: *The art of the West in the Middle Ages*, vol. 1, *Romanesque Art*. Ed.: BONY, J. Translated by D. KING. London – New York 1969, pp. 105–111. See also: BALTRUŠAITIS, J.: Ornamental stylistic in Romanesque sculpture (1931), In: *Art history: an anthology of modern criticism*. Ed.: SYPHER, W. New York 1963, pp. 117–131, as well as the works of the adversaries of the law of the frame: HEARN, M. F.: *Romanesque sculpture: the revival of monumental stone sculpture in the eleventh and twelfth centuries*. New York 1985, pp. 14–15, 42, 49, 55–56, 130–132, 138, 142, 156, 161, 163, 170, 191; SCHAPIRO, M.:

Über den Schematismus in der romanischen Kunst, Jurgis Baltrušaitis, La stylistique ornamentale dans la Sculpture Romane, Paris, Leroux 1931. In: Kritische Berichte zur kunstgeschichtlichen Literatur: (1927–1937); 6 T. in e. Bd. Eds.: ANTAL, F. – FÜRST, B. Hildesheim – New York 1972, pp. 1–21.

⁵ See also: KOWALSKI, J.: *Francja średniowieczna*. In: *Dzieje kultury francuskiej*. Warszawa 2006, p. 154.

⁶ BOCHNAK, A.: *Historia sztuki średniowiecznej*. Warszawa – Kraków 1973, pp. 115–116.

⁷ De VASCONCELOS, F.: *Sztuka portugalska*. Translated by H. LEONOWICZ. Warszawa 1984, p. 225.

The point of reference for the distortions of form are deliberate deformations, which originated on ideological and imaginative grounds and belonged to, for example, the world of monsters, fantastic creatures, and stories (Fig. 2).⁸ By the same token, one of the features of Romanesque sculpture – *horror vacui* (the fear of empty space) – can be understood in an apotropaic, magical sense. With the entire, or almost entire, capital adorned with sculptural representations, the empty space is covered and cannot be occupied by the forces of evil.⁹ In respect of formality and content, this allows for the accumulation of a rich and extensive, even multi-figural, representation on a given capital.¹⁰ On the other hand, considering the formal aspect alone, it allows for maintaining the overall shape of the capital, despite its surface being covered with decorative, sometimes deep, figural reliefs.¹¹

Other distinctive features of Romanesque sculpture include “irrealism” as well as the adaptation of representations to “architectural frames and functions.” (Fig. 1)¹² Moreover, the modern nature of the law of the frame – also in the sense of understanding contemporary art – refers to the results of the sculptor’s work, which testify to the primacy of the art created in keeping with the law of the frame over that created on the basis of the observation of nature. Deformities take primacy over the accuracy of rendering holy texts in the visual medium. Thus, they are unequivocally distinguished by the superiority of artistry and artistic values over the above-mentioned iconographic ones or mimetism, involving the imita-

tion of the surrounding world.¹³ This demonstrates the significance of entire mediaeval artistic output for the understanding of the art of subsequent eras. However, one of the peculiarities of Romanesque sculpture – the law of the frame – is of crucial importance for the purpose of this paper. The author of the concept of a religious artwork – a clergyman acting as a programmer or concept-provider towards both the artist and the artefact – chose the subject matter and iconography of the representation so that they would comply with the tenets of faith and the doctrine of the Church. On the other hand, the architect determined the framework for the sculptor in a tangible and physical way. It was a framework with specific dimensions and shapes as well as tectonic and structural functions. Despite this, the freedom of rendering, as well as deforming, figures is one of the most surprising features of Romanesque sculpture.¹⁴

Romanesque churches were oases of monumental art and architecture, forming the landscape of Christian Europe and the “white mantle of churches” of the early 11th century, as described by the chronicler, Ralph Glaber.¹⁵ Repetitive unreality and expressiveness of sculptural forms may have originated in the rigid separation of the common, temporal, and readily accessible sphere from the depicted one, which belonged to the sacred domain.¹⁶ Owing to the law of the frame, the spaces and forms featured in sculpture were in a dynamic, constant tension and remained in complex relations, whose purpose was not to introduce a type of formal-iconographic confusion. On the contrary, their

⁸ ŻARNECKI, J.: *Sztuka romańska*. Translated by A. ROŻNOWSKA-SADRAEI, Kraków 2005, p. 50.

⁹ Le GOFF, J.: *Kultura średniowiecznej Europy*. Translated by H. SZUMAŃSKA-GROSSOWA, Warszawa 1994, p. 408.

¹⁰ LIPONSKI, W.: *Dzieje kultury europejskiej: średniowiecze*. Warszawa 2020, p. 371.

¹¹ “Prawo ram” [the law of the frame]. In: MIKOCCA-RACHUBOWA, K.: *Terminy i pojęcia z wiedzy o sztuce*. Warszawa 1997, p. 141; „prawo ram” [the law of the frame]. In: ZWOLIŃSKA, K. – MALICKI, Z.: *Mały słownik terminów plastycznych*. Warszawa 1990, p. 242.

¹² LAVEDAN, P.: *Historia sztuki: średniowiecze i czasy nowożytne*. Translated by H. MORAWSKA – S. KOZAKIEWICZ, Wrocław 1954, pp. 65, 66, 78.

¹³ GĘBAROWICZ, M.: *Sztuka średniowieczna*. Lwów 1934, pp. 150, 151.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 152, 154–155.

¹⁵ FERNIE, E.: *Romanesque architecture: the first style of the European age*. New Haven – London 2014, p. 66: *candidam ecclesiarum vestem*.

¹⁶ PLAGNIEUX, P.: [text]. In: *Historia sztuki: od starożytności do postmodernizmu*. Ed.: FRONTISI, C.; Translated by: I. BADOWSKA – J. PAŁĘCKA – B. WALICKA, Warszawa 2006, pp. 122, 123.



Fig. 1: Capital with atlantes, Reims, Saint-Rémi Church, mid-11th century, an example of the law of the frame from the Romanesque era. Photo 1940/1944, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

aim was to resort to formal means in order to capture the world of the imagination of a mediaeval person and subject it to artistic discipline.¹⁷

In the diachronic understanding of the development of art, the departure from consistent application of the strict law of the frame in Gothic art and, consequently, the limitation of the distortion of figures, which are closely related to architecture, may be regarded as progress.¹⁸ The very introduction

of the law of the frame means progress in relation to early mediaeval art and, as a matter of fact, a significant novelty in relation to earlier Christian and ancient art.¹⁹ An example of such a novelty, whose rendering required the implementation of the law of the frame, was the capital of a column or a pillar, which contained figural elements that simultaneously became part of the architectural structure and assumed the functions of structural elements (Fig. 1).²⁰

¹⁷ Also see: RODZIŃSKA-CHORAŻY, T.: *Zespoły rezydencjonalne i kościoły centralne na ziemiach polskich do połowy XII wieku*. Kraków 2009, p. 256.

¹⁸ DUBY, G.: *Czasy katedr: sztuka i społeczeństwo 980–1420*. Translated by K. DOLATOWSKA, Warszawa 2002, pp. 100, 140, 143.

¹⁹ SAUERLÄNDER, W.: *Rzeźba średniowieczna*. Translated by A. POREBSKA, Warszawa 2001, p. 70.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 70; JARZEWICZ, J.: Co to jest architektura romańska, czyli problemy stylu, formy i chronologii. In: idem, *Kościół romański w Polsce*. Kraków 2014, p. 16; POREBSKI, M.: *Dzieje sztuki w zarysie*, vol. 1, *Od paleolitu po wieki średnie*. Warszawa 1987, p. 225.

The law of the frame is even described as particularly significant for the development of art,²¹ and scholars point to a significant quantitative leap in sculptural production of the early Romanesque period.²² Regarded as a “revolutionary” discovery, Romanesque sculpture appeared in the West around the year 1000. It was distinguished by frequent and three-dimensional depiction of biblical and religious events and figures of saints. The sculpture became popular and evolved rapidly. Nevertheless, it is mostly characterised by the “entrapment” of sculptural forms in architectural ones.²³ The law of the frame cannot be regarded as a limitation of artistry or a pursuit to schematise artistic exploration.²⁴ On the contrary, it was an expression of consistency in artistic creation.²⁵

Sculpture was governed by strictly defined principles, which emphasised figurativeness on the one hand and stressed ornamentation on the other. Moreover, individual ornamental parts of the capital were characterised by autonomy, intensified mutual relationships, and dynamic movements.²⁶ As Ernst Hans Gombrich wrote with regard to decorative, functional art, it is appropriate to speak of a “sense of order” of Romanesque sculpture, combined with non-naturalistic expression exceeding what is available in nature.²⁷ It is worth recalling Zbigniew Świechowski’s memorable words, which perfectly reflect the specificity of Romanesque sculpture and refer to the “conformism” of sculpture and its sub-

ordination to architecture²⁸ – especially in terms of figurative art – as well as to the “laws of ornamental stylistics,” the “dialectic” of superior and inferior art and fusion thereof.²⁹

Avoiding the term “the law of the frame,” Focillon wrote several times about the conformism of forms; still, he used the phrase “adaptation to a surrounding frame.”³⁰ Similarly, Mieczysław Porębski repeatedly provided extensive quotations from the texts of Focillon – the discoverer and, together with Jurgis Baltrušaitis, the codifier of the law of the frame. Also, Adam Bochnak cited, after nearly 40 years, one of the most recognisable quotes by Mieczysław Gębarowicz, the author of a valuable synthesis of mediaeval art, published in the early 1930s. The passage refers to Romanesque sculpture and, significantly, to the law of the frame: “This caprice, however, knows certain limits, and they are established by the will of the architect, to whom the sculptor and decorator must submit. Therefore, the polymorphism of Romanesque ornamentation never turns into chaos or exceeds the boundaries set for the sculpture within the framework of the architectural whole.”³¹ The law of the frame makes it possible to assign Romanesque sculptures into a clear, formal, and logical system. However, the system of formal principles, discussed herein, does not point to possible, concrete artistic influences or a specific artistic genesis. This is probably due to the universal and transborder nature of the imperatives addressed in this article.

²¹ PORĘBSKI 1987 (see in note 20), p. 222.

²² BOCHNAK 1973 (see in note 6), p. 116.

²³ DUBY, G.: Średniowiecze, wiek X–XV. In: DUBY, G. – MANDROU, R. *Historia kultury francuskiej: wiek X–XX*. Translated by H. SZUMAŃSKA-GROSSOWA, Warszawa 1965, pp. 92–93.

²⁴ ZWOLIŃSKA, K.: *Mała historia sztuki*. Warszawa 1995, pp. 157–158.

²⁵ De VASCONCELOS 1984 (see in note 7), p. 45.

²⁶ PORĘBSKI 1987 (see in note 20), p. 226.

²⁷ MASSIP BONET, F.: Romanizm. In: idem, CHICO PICAZA, V.: *Bizancjum, Islam, sztuka romańska, Historia sztuki świata*, vol. 2. Translated by B. GUTOWSKA-NOWAK,

Warszawa 1999, p. 300; GOMBRICH, E. H.: *Zmysł porządku: o psychologii sztuki dekoracyjnej*. Ed.: FOLGA-JANUSZEWSKA, D. Kraków 2009, passim.

²⁸ ŚWIECHOWSKI, Z.: Wprowadzenie. In: ŚWIECHOWSKI, Z. – NOWAK, L. – GUMIŃSKA, B., *Sztuka romańska*. Warszawa 1976, p. 7; Świechowski is quoted by: RODZIŃSKA-CHORAŻY, T.: Badania nad architekturą wczesnośredniowieczną w Polsce — między romantyzmem a dekonstrukcją. In: *Architektura romańska w Polsce. Nowe odkrycia i interpretacje, Materiały z sesji naukowej w Muzeum Początków Państwa Polskiego – Gniezno, 9–11 kwietnia 2008 roku*. Ed.: JANIĄK, T. Gniezno 2009, p. 57.

²⁹ ŚWIECHOWSKI, Z.: Rzeźba. In: ŚWIECHOWSKI – NOWAK – GUMIŃSKA 1976 (see in note 28), pp. 280, 281.

³⁰ FOCILLON 1969 (see in note 4), p. 106.



Fig. 2: Capital with a strongman struggling with monsters, Czerveńskie nad Wisłą, Smaller Basilica of Our Lady of Consolation, mid-12th century, an example of the law of the frame, axial symmetry, ornamental scheme and antithetical group. Photo by author, 2008.

Reception and contexts

Several scholars classified Romanesque architecture as the first style which was commonly followed in Europe and, to use a more precise description, in Western civilization. One of them was Eric Fernie, who, in a recent work, pointed, again, to fitting sculpture to architectural shapes, which was typical of the Romanesque era and which was more accurate compared to the practice of other artistic periods.³² Such a comprehensive description of the entirety of art can be formulated with regard to Romanesque

sculpture, albeit to a lesser extent than to architecture. The point determining the coherence and universality of stone sculpture of the 11th and 12th centuries is nothing but the law of the frame, which, naturally, kept changing with the passage of time. Romanesque figures exemplify the sculptor's own, well thought-out solution to the rendering of a person with the chisel, with the law of the frame constituting the main element in this artistic process.³³

For the modern recipient, the sculptor's own artistic concepts can be most easily compared to the manifestations of art of the 20th and 21st centuries

³¹ BOCHNAK 1973 (see in note 6), p. 120; GĘBAROWICZ 1934 (see in note 13), p. 156.

³² FERNIE 2014 (see in note 15), pp. 24, 28, endnote 19 (p. 253).

³³ ESTREICHER, K.: *Historia sztuki w zarysie*. Warszawa – Kraków 1990, p. 353.



Fig. 3: Christ Pantokrator, Würzburg, 1170, Diocesan Museum. Photo by author, 2021.

and to some features of Surrealism.³⁴ Even without making a reference to Cubism, “Cubist” aspects of both the religious Romanesque buildings, erected in line with the principle of harmonious addition of blocks, and the sculptural decoration ensembles adorning them are indicated.³⁵ Undeniably, this demonstrates that Romanesque sculpture has achieved an above-average, distinctive quality.³⁶ In literature, one can encounter the term “Romanesque canon,” which corresponds to the rectangular contour of sculptural representations set in the framework of architecture, “dictating” that sculpture should assume certain figural forms.³⁷

On the other hand, the “rounding of contours” and noticeable, yet gradual, liberation from the law of the frame in the 12th century was supposed to represent progress. This was another novelty in Romanesque art, dimming the brilliance of the previous one and paving the way for Gothic art, in which sculpture had a different, less close, connection with architecture, even though it still emphasized it and its compositional lines.³⁸ In the French Gothic, the process of departing from the inherently close relation of Romanesque sculpture and architecture took place from the mid-12th to the late 14th century.³⁹ It may be noticed that – said in a different context – this sentence delivered by Jean Paul Couchoud coincides with Wölfflin’s observation cited in the introduction. With its new trends in realism and expression as well as with the sculpture of Claus Sluter and Claus de Werve, the 15th century represents another step in the development of sculpture, moving further and further away from the law of the frame (Fig. 4).⁴⁰ In Gothic, sculpture continues to be related to archi-

³⁴ “romańska sztuka” [Romanesque art]. In: *Słownik terminologiczny sztuk pięknych*. Ed.: KOZAKIEWICZ, S. Warszawa 1976, p. 404. Shorter entries referring to the law of the frame in Romanesque sculpture were provided by: KALINOWSKI, L.: “romańska sztuka” [Romanesque art]. In: *Słownik terminologiczny sztuk pięknych*. Eds.: KUBALSKA-SULKIEWICZ, K. – BIELSKA-ŁACH, M. – MANTEUFFEL-SZAROTA, A. Warszawa 2005, p. 355; “rzeźba,” “romańska sztuka.” [sculpture, Romanesque art] In: *Uniwersalna encyklopedia multimedialna PWN* [DVD-ROM]. Ed.: KACZOROWSKI, B. Warszawa 2008.

³⁵ BOCHNAK 1973 (see in note 6), p. 117.

³⁶ MROCZKO, T.: Sztuka przedromańska i romańska. In:

Dzieje sztuki powszechnej; praca zbiorowa. Ed.: KOWALSKA, B. Warszawa 1990, pp. 126, 127.

³⁷ TATARKIEWICZ, W.: *Medieval aesthetics*. Ed.: BARRETT, C. Translated by R. M. MONTGOMERY. Hague – Paris – Warszawa 1970, p. 140.

³⁸ COUCHOUD, J. P.: *Sztuka francuska*, vol. 1. Translated by E. BĄKOWSKA. Warszawa 1985, pp. 76, 117, 119.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 120, 127, 155. On this topic, see also: POREBSKI 1987 (see in note 20), p. 234.

⁴⁰ LAVEDAN 1954 (see in note 12), p. 149.

ecture, which provides a basis for the three-dimensional art, but does not so overwhelmingly dominate sculptural representations.⁴¹ The very end of the Romanesque era makes the law of the frame less noticeable in the Romanesque Baroque in the late 12th and 13th centuries, when the relations of sculpture and architecture loosen.⁴² Figures become free, including their orientation towards one another, thus allowing for the introduction of a new aspect of the narrative as in the Portico della Gloria in Santiago de Compostela, chiseled by Master Matteo of Galicia in 1188.⁴³

The subordination of Romanesque sculpture to the law of the frame became a point of reference in grasping the specificity of the art of other types and subsequent eras.⁴⁴ The very application of the law of the frame had to be conscious and, at the same time, purposeful in order to have a teleological dimension.⁴⁵ The primacy of architecture over Romanesque sculpture became a subject of social, economic, and historical interpretations, resulting from referring to the feudal and hierarchical relations of the time as the context of art.⁴⁶ On the other hand, Romanesque architecture and sculpture form a unified, and thus rather egalitarian, whole.⁴⁷ Although painting was also subordinate to architecture,⁴⁸ it does not mean that it met all the criteria of the law of the frame.

Other than in the case of sculpture, early 12th-century, Byzantinising wall paintings of the Cluniac chapel in Berze-la-Ville in Burgundy demonstrate a relation of painting to architecture – in terms of adapting the shapes of figures – which is only partially compliant with the law of the frame.⁴⁹ Deformations were applied to a greater extent in Romanesque book painting, in which the relation



Fig. 4: Erasmus Grasser, *Morisco Dancer*, around 1480, late Gothic departure from the law of the frame. Photo 1886/1915, © Bildarchiv Foto Marburg.

of architecture and sculpture, known from the law of the frame, was reflected by the shapes of letters, determining the figural shapes of the illuminated initials embedded in them. Sometimes the frame could be transgressed, as exemplified by a wall paint-

⁴¹ PORĘBSKI 1987 (see in note 20), p. 232.

⁴² LAVEDAN 1954 (see in note 12), p. 79.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 93.

⁴⁴ De VASCONCELOS 1984 (see in note 7), p. 225; FLOREA, V.: *Sztuka rumuńska*. Translated by E. ŁUCZAK. Warszawa 1989, p. 119.

⁴⁵ OSIŃSKA, B.: *Sztuka i czas*, part 1, *Od prehistorii do rokoka*. Warszawa 2004, p. 91.

⁴⁶ MASSIP BONET 1999 (see in note 27), p. 299.

⁴⁷ GĘBAROWICZ 1934 (see in note 13), p. 148.

⁴⁸ KUNICKI, W.: *Średniowiecze do około 1400 roku*. In: KAROLAK, C. – KUNICKI, W. – ORŁOWSKI, H. *Dzieje kultury niemieckiej*. Warszawa 2015, p. 33.

⁴⁹ MACHOWSKI, M.: *Opisy ilustracji*. In: *Sztuka świata*, vol. 3. Ed.: idem. Warszawa 2006, p. 330.

ing depicting the fight between David and Goliath and rendered in the church of Santa Maria de Taüll, Catalonia, around 1123.⁵⁰

Miniature painting allows the artist to exercise more creative freedom than a sculptor working in the stone may have. Consequently, it can be acknowledged that, in miniature book painting, the law of the frame enjoys its own specific, limited application, different from that in monumental sculpture.⁵¹ In illuminations dating to, among others, around 1230 and adorning books with texts by the mystic Hildegard of Bingen, who lived in the 12th century, it has been observed that miniatures were set in frames – also those featuring ornamental, architectural shapes – as well as outside them. Limiting the number of representations in manuscript illustrations – and thus departing from the compliance with the content of the illuminated text – is consistent with the freedom of a mediaeval artist, as emphasised by Rudolf Berliner. On the other hand, it may demonstrate a departure from the laws of *horror vacui*. This principle is typical of some of the sculptures created in the spirit of the law of the frame, whereas a lack thereof in miniature art translates into greater legibility of representations.⁵² The law of the frame is also applied in luxury artworks, goldsmithing, small ivory sculptures,⁵³ bronze products, architectural objects belonging to the *vasa sacra*, and even in woodcarving.⁵⁴

Examples of the law of the frame in Romanesque art

The first examples of the application of the law of the frame that come to mind are often the relief from the lintel (*linthead*) of the church in Saint-Genis-des-Fontaines in southern France,⁵⁵ inscriptionally dated to the years 1019–1020, and a similar, also novel, bas-relief lintel from the church in Saint-Andre-de-Sorede, a nearby town.⁵⁶ A later example of a naturally resolved adaptation of the shape of figural sculpture to the *linthead* format – albeit without far-reaching deformation – is the famous biblical Eve from the Cathedral of Saint Lazarus in Autun, created around 1130 by Gislebertus.⁵⁷

The law of the frame is considered to be the best reflection of the features of the Romanesque sculpture of western France and the principle which was most widely used in the art of the region.⁵⁸ Although the law of the frame is generally inherent in western Romanesque art, it is less common in Italy.⁵⁹ It was applied as late as in 1196 by Benedetto Antelami in the northern portal of the Marian baptistery in Parma.⁶⁰ However, less abundant in quantity, Lombard sculpture did not strictly conform to the law of the frame.⁶¹ The said law was noticed less frequently and, admittedly, to a lesser extent, in eastern Romanesque art, including Poland, where Romanesque sculpture appeared later than in the West.⁶² Examples thereof include the tympanum from Saint Michael the Arch-

⁵⁰ GUMIŃSKA, B.: *Malarstwo*. In: ŚWIECHOWSKI – NOWAK – GUMIŃSKA 1976 (see in note 28), pp. 304, 306, 308, 309, 358.

⁵¹ Confer: BOCHNAK 1973 (see in note 6), p. 164.

⁵² GODLEWICZ-ADAMIEC, J.: *Plastyczne i językowe środki wyrazu w dziełach mistyków niemieckich epoki średniowiecza*. Warszawa 2005, pp. 346, 348, 351; BERLINER, R.: *Wolność w sztuce średniowiecza*. In: *Artium Quaestiones*, 27, 2016, pp. 249–278.

⁵³ DURAND, J.: *Sztuka średniowiecza*. Translated by P. WRZOSEK, Warszawa 2007, p. 58, 59.

⁵⁴ ŚWIECHOWSKI 1976 (see in note 28), p. 7.

⁵⁵ PRADALIER, H.: *Sztuka romańska*. In: *Historia sztuki 1000–2000*. Ed.: MÉROT, A. Translated by P. WRZOSEK, Warszawa 1998, p. 22.

⁵⁶ *Sztuka romańska. Wczesne średniowiecze*. Translated by E. PALKA. Kraków 2010, p. 143.

⁵⁷ DURAND 2007 (see in note 53), p. 51.

⁵⁸ GEESE, U.: *Rzeźba romańska*. In: *Sztuka romańska: architektura, rzeźba, malarstwo*. Ed.: TOMAN, R. Translated by R. WOLSKI, Köln 2000, p. 271.

⁵⁹ CHASTEL, A.: *Sztuka włoska*, vol. 1. Translated by E. BĄKOWSKA, Warszawa 1978, p. 30.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 84, 85.

⁶¹ GĘBAROWICZ 1934 (see in note 13), pp. 209, 210; BOCHNAK 1973 (see in note 6), p. 144.

⁶² MROCZKO, T.: *Polska sztuka przedromańska i romańska*. Warszawa 1978, p. 93.

angel's Church in Wrocław, from about 1160,⁶³ the tympanum Saint Vincent's Church in Olbin, from the 1230s,⁶⁴ and the tympanum of the northern portal of the Holy Trinity Church at the Norbertine monastery in Strzelno, in the Kujawy [Cuiavia] region, from about 1216.⁶⁵ To a smaller degree, a part of the peculiar Romanesque "dialectic of forms" applies to the figures depicted in the columns in the church in Strzelno, dating to the fourth quarter of the 12th century.⁶⁶ Examples of bronze figures, adjusting to the superior principle of decorativeness and mentioned in the context of the law of the frame, include those from the rim of the Gniezno Doors from the second half of the 12th century.⁶⁷ Thus, the law of the frame applies to a fragment of an artwork whose form and iconography resemble miniature artefacts. By the same token, a further reflection of the law of the frame can be seen in the second bronze door leading to the baptistery in Florence, made by Lorenzo Ghiberti in the years 1403–1424.⁶⁸

Changes in the approach to the law of the frame can be seen in a late-Romanesque relief, depicting Christ Pantocrator, from the cloisters of the Neumünsterkirche in Würzburg, from around 1170 (Fig. 3). The law of frame and *horror vacui* were not strictly applied in the case of this artwork. Moreover, understood literally, the upper part of the frame bends (like the *kovcheg* in icons), pushed out by the figural representation for which it must make room, thus losing its superiority.

The mere placement of figures in architectural and, at the same time, compositional divisions does not unambiguously translate into the application of the law of the frame (or lack thereof), governed by

specificity with more profound and precise determinants. The description of the law of the frame, contained in this article, clearly demonstrates its enormous significance for understanding the art of Romanesque and subsequent eras. Its rich, diversified, independent, and original reception, presented in each of the publications studied for the purpose of this text, is of equal importance. The use of the law of the frame was presented in both academic and lay literature on art history, culture, aesthetics, and mediaeval history. Although referring to the law of the frame has not become the leitmotif of synthetic publications on art, it has been at least an obligatory point of consideration for most authors studying Romanesque, Gothic, and even much later art. The above-discussed law of the frame is also mentioned in the context of previous artistic eras. After a careful analysis of publications, it can be concluded that references to the law of the frame on the pages of just one synthesis of mediaeval art are quoted to a considerable extent. Due to the uniqueness of the authors' out-of-the-box statements, only studying all the works cited made it possible to look at Romanesque sculptures as fully as possible through the lens of the law of the frame and function. A comprehensive analysis has also demonstrated how much knowledge of the above-discussed set of principles of Romanesque art a reader of the 57 publications studied can obtain. In compliance with George Kubler's methodology, Focillon's and Baltrušaitis's works are prime objects and sources of inspiration for a series of ingenious fragments of publications analysed in the paper, which can be described as replicas of Focillon's and Baltrušaitis's fundamental reflections.⁶⁹

(English translation by Magdalena Kopczyńska)

⁶³ DOBROWOLSKI, T.: *Sztuka polska: od czasów najdawniejszych do ostatnich*. Kraków 1974, p. 63.

⁶⁴ ŚWIECHOWSKI, Z.: *Romanizm*. With contribution from ŚWIECHOWSKA, E., Warszawa 2006, (*Sztuka polska* 1. Ed.: KOWALCZYK, J.), p. 236.

⁶⁵ Ibidem, pp. 250, 251; SZCZĘSNA, J.: Tympanon portalu północnego ponorbertańskiego kościoła Świętej Trójcy w Strzelnie. In: *Roczniki Humanistyczne: Historia Sztuki*, 53, 2005, p. 8.

⁶⁶ BIAŁOSTOCKI, J.: *Sztuka cenniejsza niż złoto: opowieść o sztuce europejskiej naszej ery*. Warszawa 2011, pp. 135, 136.

⁶⁷ PRZYBYSZEWSKI, B.: *Romańskie kościoły pielgrzymkowe*. Kraków 1979, p. 179.

⁶⁸ LAVEDAN 1954 (see in note 12), p. 163.

⁶⁹ For a universal meaning of Kubler's methodology, see: WASZAK, P.: Rozwojowe ciągi formalno-ideowe w ramach konstrukcji czasu artystycznego George'a Kublera. In: *Sztuka i Kultura*, 5, 2017/2018, pp. 349–366.

The Right of Art, the Principle of the Artist, the Imperative of the Scholar. The Example of a Romanesque Sculptor's Workshop in the Context of the Law of the Frame

Résumé

Striving to develop their knowledge in an appropriate manner, students of the history of art should start with acquainting themselves with synthetic works, preferably not limiting themselves to reading just one or several of them. Hence, the article addresses the reception of the law of the frame formulated by Henri Focillon and Jurgis Baltrušaitis. Early, extensive, and frequent references in numerous cross-sectional academic and lay publications on history, the history of art, culture, and aesthetics demonstrate the uniqueness of the law of the frame. Simultaneously, the principle has become an imperative proclaimed in the arguments of many scholars. Primarily, the law of the frame makes it possible to methodically describe and formally classify the works created by Romanesque sculptors. The law of the frame addresses the issue of the relationship of architectural sculpture with architecture, which is superior to it. An analysis of the historiography of the law of the frame has revealed the innovativeness of many scholars' approaches, their own attempts

at interpreting it and striving to introduce the law to readers in a different manner. One can notice attempts to extend the application of the law of the frame to studies of the art of other eras and to more distant fields as well as to materials other than the stone. The methodological context of the mosaic of research views, which still share a common source, is the – broadly understood – methodology of George Kubler, while the starting point is one of the philosophical *Fragments* by Friedrich Schlegel. Efforts were made to include a new perspective on the law of the frame and function. The law has not lost its relevance until today, both in teaching and in the popularisation of knowledge, as well as in scholars' own analytical research into art history. Its application must have been natural and instinctive for Romanesque sculptors, while its academic codification and explication have been provided as late as in the works of the aforementioned art historians. All publications cited have been analyzed in their entirety.

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