

— **A sign of prestige. Reflections on the framing of a drawing on the sidelines of the exhibition “Jan Piotr Norblin. Sentymentalny reporter” at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 2022**

DOI: 10.36155/NK.25.00007

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notes 25_2023
konserwatorski

Summary: Katarzyna Garczewska-Semka, *A sign of prestige. Reflections on the framing of a drawing on the sidelines of the exhibition “Jan Piotr Norblin. Sentymentalny reporter” at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, 2022*

The article provides an overview of techniques for framing drawings, including form, mounting and ornamentation techniques. Within this context, the framing of drawings by Jan Piotr Norblin from the Royal Castle collection in Warsaw is described. A frame is defined here as an assembly of mounts or *passe-partouts*, prepared for storage or presentation, their characteristics are discussed not only in terms of decoration, but in terms of manufacturing techniques, mounting methods and other features. Technology of production and composition of materials makes it possible to approximate the time of creation of the frame, but the information gained from knowledge of the historical development of the drawing frame is also important. All these factors make it possible to determine the historical value of particular types of frames. Framing materials and storage methods often significantly affect the state of preservation of the drawings, thus creating a problem in securing them. The article cites several examples of the

destructive effect of frames on drawings and a short discussion of conservation works or solutions applied.

— The impetus for writing this article was the exhibition “Jan Piotr Norblin. Sentymentalny Reporter,” taking place at the Royal Castle in Warsaw from September 9 to December 11, 2022, presenting Norblin’s works from the Castle’s own collection. The collection of drawings by Jan Piotr Norblin in the Royal Castle was acquired after World War II through purchases on antique markets, mainly in Western Europe, primarily by the Ciechanowiecki Foundation. These drawings were kept in the Royal Castle as deposits, and recently, they were donated to the Castle. The manner of acquisition somewhat influences the form of storage and presentation of the collection. The majority of drawings are stored framed under glass, employing various types of paper mounting – drawings were either affixed to boards or framed with *passe-partout* before being placed in the frames. Most of these mounts are ornamented to some degree. The method of acquisition poses challenges in determining the time and place of framing creation. During the preparation of the drawing items for the exhibition, some underwent conservation work, and a series of studies on drawing techniques were conducted¹. However, the most time-consuming and intricate task involved preparing the objects for display – placing them in frames while preserving, modifying, or eliminating existing mounts, often requiring numerous minor yet significant decisions.

Currently, the most common form of presentation of drawings and prints is mounting them in a conservative *passe-partout*. The required quality cardboards, which meet ISO standards for storing valuable paper objects, usually come in various shades of cream color. This method of presentation, although it seems obvious, has developed relatively recently in museum workshops and,

¹ These studies were discussed in the article: R. Dmowska, K. Garczewska-Semka, M. Zdańkowska, *Pióro i pędzel. Behind the scenes of Jan Piotr Norblin’s workshop*, in: *Jan Piotr Norblin. Sentymentalny reporter. Malarstwo i grafika*, Warsaw 2022.

apart from technical requirements, is intended to increase concentration on the object, without distracting attention with additional details of the setting. However, for centuries, the drawing was provided with a very decorative immediate environment in the form of a board or a decorative *passe-partout*. Such a form of presentation was intended to increase its attractiveness, add elegance, and finally – through combinations of concentric lines and frames – to help draw attention to it during connoisseur meetings. The former setting now has historical value in addition to its decorative value. The most easily recognizable aspect lies in the distinctive board decoration surrounding the artwork, which often serves as a hallmark for a specific collector or institution. This particular facet has garnered significant attention in recounting the history of framing drawings. Equally pivotal but somewhat more inconspicuous are the evolving technical solutions, which may be challenging to discern but frequently play a crucial role in preserving these delicate art pieces. In the subsequent section of this article, I will endeavor to delineate the history of mounting the drawing objects, contextualizing it within the rich array of different frame types the Royal Castle in Warsaw's collection of Norblin's works.

The meaning and function of mounts and mounting

The need for the proper presentation of drawings naturally emerged as these artworks gained increased significance among connoisseurs and collectors. Initially, when drawings primarily served didactic purposes or functioned as models for copying, their storage was primarily practical, aimed at protection from damage. Drawings were either compiled into book forms or loosely placed between the unprinted pages of completed codices. However, as drawings began to be recognized as the purest expression of an artist's genius, the manner of presentation gained greater importance. The practice of affixing drawings to rigid cards and mounting them with ornamental mounts created an impression akin to a framed painting, with concentric lines surrounding the drawing to guide and focus the viewer's attention.

The methods of embellishing cards with drawings often displayed unique characteristics specific to individual collectors, serving today as distinctive indicators of provenance. The foremost compilation of patterns for collector's mounts, can be found in the comprehensive study by Carlo James. However, this resource predominantly covers Western European countries such as Italy, France, England, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Sweden.² A valuable and continually updated resource is the website of the Custodia Foundation in Paris³, which carries on the work initiated by its founder, Frits Lugt, in 1921⁴. The attribution of mounts to particular collectors remains a subject of ongoing debate, as highlighted by the 2022 exhibition at the Louvre Museum⁵. This event involved a reassessment of the attribution of an intricately decorated mount to the renowned *Libro de' disegni* collection of Giorgio Vasari (1511–1574)⁶. Vasari's collection is acknowledged as marking the commencement of the era of decorative presentation of drawings. In 1730, another esteemed connoisseur and drawing collector, Pierre-Jean Mariette (1694–1774), attributed a specific type of mount to Vasari's collection.

The influential figures of the two collectors mentioned previously, Giorgio Vasari and Pierre-Jean Mariette, significantly shaped the perception of drawing montage for an extended period. Giorgio Vasari, renowned as a painter, architect, and the pioneer of art historical studies, authored the first volume of artists' biographies titled *Le vite de' più eccellenti architetti, pittori, et scultori italiani, da Cimabue insino a' tempi nostri* (Lives of the Most Excellent

2 C. James, C. Corrigan, M. Ch. Enshaian, M. R. Greca, *Old Master Prints and Drawings, a Guide to Preservation and Conservation*, transl. M. B. Cohn, Amsterdam 1997, chapter *Collectors and Mountings* [ed. Carlo James], p. 2–35.

3 <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr>. [access: December 5, 2023].

4 F. Lugt, *Les Marques de collections de dessin et d'estampes*, Paris 1921.

5 *Giorgio Vasari. Le Livre des dessins. Destinées d'une collection mythique*, exhibition at the Louvre Museum March 31 – July 18, 2022.

6 L. Frank, C. Fryklund, *Giorgio Vasari, le Livre des dessins. Destinées d'une collection mythique*, Paris 2022.

Painters, Sculptors, and Architects), initially published in 1550. Vasari also held the distinction of being among the earliest and certainly the most famous collectors of drawings. Vasari's mythical collection, the *Libro de' disegni*, housing his drawings, was dispersed shortly after his death. Initially, it was believed that there were several volumes of the book, with some allegedly acquired by another Italian collector, Niccolò Gaddi (1537–1591), and subsequently scattered following his demise⁷. The quest for the pages of this legendary book generated considerable excitement. Presently, only around 30 cards with confirmed provenance exist, most of which have lost their original decorative mounting. Surprisingly, the framing of many drawings previously thought to be characteristic of Vasari's collection is now attributed to Gaddi, who organized his collection based on Vasari's work.

Conversely, Pierre-Jean Mariette stands out as a preeminent figure among drawing collectors. Born into a family deeply involved in publishing, engraving, and the trade of prints – where he held the notable position of being the fourth generation – he eventually became the most distinguished member. This familial background granted him the opportunity, later in life, to divest himself of the family business and wholeheartedly pursue his personal passions, with drawing collection at the forefront. Mariette played a pivotal role in advancing drawing connoisseurship in eighteenth-century Paris, setting a trend that resonated throughout Europe. His expertise was highly regarded, not only for his knowledge but also for his distinctive approach to presenting his collection. He meticulously affixed his drawings to individual boards featuring a blue background, complemented by an intricate combination of gray and cream paper strips, ink lines, and subtly antiqued gold surrounding the drawing. This style of mounting has served as an enduring inspiration for subsequent collectors over the years and remains acknowledged as the quintessential method of presenting a drawing.

⁷ C. James, C. Corrigan, M. Ch. Enshaian, M. R. Greca, *Old Master Prints and Drawings...*, ed. cit., p. 3.

Storage of drawings

Beyond mere decoration, the survival of a drawing is significantly influenced by its physical presentation and technical considerations. In the early days, drawings were affixed to album pages, as exemplified by Vasari's *Libro de' disegni*. Concurrently, an alternative method emerged in the form of loose boards stored within portfolios, a practice likely employed for Gaddi's collection and later popularized by Pierre-Jean Mariette. The use of loose boards also carried a practical dimension, facilitating the ease of comparison and examination of drawings during gatherings of connoisseurs.

The imperative to safeguard the fragile surface of drawings spurred the advancement of increasingly effective technical solutions in mounting construction. In albums, thick paper sheets were employed, and drawings were affixed to them either entirely or in specific areas, typically the corners. However, this approach gave rise to the issue of "buildup" in the central part of the book block, causing the book covers to warp, sometimes to the extent of rendering the book unopenable. This predicament prompted the innovation of mounting drawings within a cut-out aperture slightly smaller than the drawing's format. In this method, the drawing was pasted edge-to-edge within the confines of the cut-out hole, often with the paper at the joint abraded or highly polished to offset its increased thickness. This mounting technique is exemplified in the 17th-century collection of Cassiano dal Pozzo⁸. To shield the drawing's surface, spacers made of smooth, thin paper were inserted or permanently affixed between the album pages.

To provide a sturdier foundation for loose boards, a more robust substrate was employed, offering enhanced protection for the drawing paper against bending. This involved the lamination of multiple layers of paper sheets, a technique described as early as the 19th century⁹, though it was likely

⁸ J. M. Kosek, *Conservation mounting for prints and drawings*, London 2009, p. 5.

⁹ F. Nicholson, *The Practice of Drawing and Painting Landscape from Nature in Water Colors exemplified in a Series of Instructions calculated to facilitate the Progress of the Learner, includ-*

practiced even earlier. While factory-made cardboard became commonplace with advancements in papermaking, handmade boards persisted in use, underscoring the meticulous care dedicated to valuable drawings. To protect the drawing's surface from contact with the preceding card, the backs of the boards were meticulously polished, or sheets of soft, smooth paper were affixed to them. Nevertheless, this did not entirely resolve the issue of safeguarding the front of stacked drawings until the advent of the *passe-partout* with a cut-out window. This mounting comprised two sheets – a backing and a top sheet – with the cardboard layer around the window slightly elevated compared to the drawing's surface. The usage of such *passe-partouts* for storage is believed to have originated at the British Museum around the mid-19th century, with William May Scott, an employee since 1845, credited as its creator. The frames he utilized consisted of two components – a backing and an overlay with a cut-out window, affixed over the entire surface. This configuration created a flat “tray,” effectively safeguarding the object's surface from abrasion. The framed items were then stored in standardized Solander-type boxes in various formats.¹⁰

Indirect evidence, such as advertisements from bookbinders, suggests that the practice of using *passe-partout* for framing drawings within frames and under glass likely predates official records¹¹. Initially, wooden slats served as spacers to create a gap between the drawing's surface and the glass, later replaced by broader wooden panels, often adorned or gilded. A striking illustration of such a frame is evident in Wincenty Kasprzycki's 1839 drawing, *Widok wnętrza salonu* (Interior view of the living room), housed in the National Museum in

ing the Elements of Perspective, their Application in Sketching from Nature, and the Explanation of various Processes of Coloring, for producing from the Outline a Finished Picture; with Observations on the Study of Nature, and various other Matters relative to the Arts, London 1820, p. 73–75.

¹⁰ J. M. Kosek, *Conservation mounting...*, ed. cit., p. 3.

¹¹ A. Donnithorne, *Mounting*, entry in: *The Dictionary of Art*, vol. 22, New York 1996, p. 232–239.

Warsaw¹². Conversely, an instance of a cardboard *passe-partout*, created just prior to the mid-19th century, can be observed in Teofil Kwiatkowski's gouache painting, *Syreny* (The Mermaids) (signed and dated 1841), presumably framed in France and currently housed in the National Library. Notably, numerous paint samples are preserved in the margins of the cardboard to which the gouache is affixed, suggesting the authorial nature of this montage. Simultaneously, the artist likely anticipated a form of framing that would conceal these paint samples during the presentation. This purpose is fulfilled by a thick cardboard featuring an oval cut-out window, covered with paper and bordered by a gilded strip around the opening.¹³

The edges of the cut-out window were typically cut at a diagonal angle, with their surfaces either polished or gilded. One of the most intricate forms of an exceptionally deep *passe-partout* is known as the Viennese *passe-partout*. This design comprises two or more layers of cardboard, with both the bottom and the front covered in paper. The slanted edge of the window is achieved by affixing additional strips of paper, often in a contrasting color to the paper used on the face of the *passe-partout*. The inaugural use of this particular framing style took place at Vienna's Albertina during the 1873 World Exhibition.¹⁴

Presentation in frames behind glass

The two methods of storing drawings – within albums and on loose boards in folders or boxes – have coexisted and continue to be used concurrently.

¹² The drawing was presented in 2017 at an exhibition at the MNW Biedermeier: *Biedermeier*, catalog of the exhibition at the National Museum in Warsaw, ed. A. Kozak, A. Rosales-Rodriges, Warsaw 2017, p. 126.

¹³ Object stored in the Iconography Warehouse of the National Library (R/21640/Sz); scans with and without *passe-partout* are available in Polona, <https://polona.pl/item-view/2e36b91e-a52b-4005-8fb1-6036861380bb?page=0> [access: November 15, 2023].

¹⁴ E.-M. Loh, S. Eyb-Green and W. Baatz, *The Development of Mounts and Mounting Techniques at the Albertina in Vienna from 1805 to 2018*, "Restaurator", vol. 40 (3–4), 2019, p. 154.

Another prevalent form of storage, particularly for the presentation of drawings, involves permanent framing behind glass. In conservation literature, it is mentioned that the practice of framing drawings began when sufficiently large and uniformly clear sheets of glass became available, likely as early as the 18th century¹⁵. While this glass availability facilitated framing, it was initially more commonly used for framing pastels, whose delicate surfaces required protection. Throughout much of the 18th century, drawings predominantly remained housed in portfolios and albums. When displayed on walls, they were often directly affixed to them, as indicated by iconographic sources¹⁶. However, exhibiting drawings without protective measures faced resistance from more enlightened connoisseurs. This sentiment is evident in an account of August Moszynski's (1731–1786) trip to Italy. During a visit to Michelangelo's house, he observed, "In another study, several drawings sketched by Michelangelo, not glazed, which are destroyed by dust".¹⁷

The initial presentation of drawings in a mass-framed format occurred at the first public exhibition held in post-revolutionary France at the Galerie d'Apollon, Musee Central des Arts, in 1797. During this exhibition, the drawings were uniformly displayed and framed under glass¹⁸. In England, following the Napoleonic Wars, souvenirs from the Grand Tour took the form of framed watercolors, adorning walls as decorative elements. Starting in the early 19th century, watercolorist associations were established in England, contributing to elevating the status of watercolors and transitioning them from private interiors to public

¹⁵ M. Holbein Ellis, *The care of prints and drawings*, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London 2017, p. 142.

¹⁶ M. Laszczkowski, *Grafika w dekoracji nowożytnego wnętrza. Ilustracje do „Metamorfoz” Owidiusza w Białym Domku*, w: *Metamorfozy. Królewska kolekcja grafiki Stanisława Augusta*, exhibition catalog of the Royal Łazienki Museum, May 25 – September 1, 2013, ed. J. Talbierska, Warszawa 2013, p. LI.

¹⁷ A. Moszyński, *Dziennik podróży do Francji i Włoch 1784–1786*, Cracow 1970, p. 191.

¹⁸ T. Burns, *Preserving master drawings. A cultural perspective*, "The Paper Conservator" 2001, vol. 25, p. 109.

showrooms. In central Europe, framed drawings gained popularity as they began to serve as ornaments for the more intimate interiors characteristic of the Biedermeier era.

Before being placed in a frame, drawings were commonly prepared by framing them in a *passe-partout* or affixing them to a board, employing the methods discussed earlier. Alongside framing under glass with additional elements like a board or *passe-partout*, a technique known as direct framing or *close mount* was also utilized. In this approach, the drawing's paper was often stretched over a wooden backing or wrapped with its edges against the glass. This method of presentation aimed to imbue gouache or watercolor works with a resemblance to oil paintings. A unique instance of wall presentation for drawings involves varnishing them and placing them in frames without glass. This method was even recommended as a means to avoid distracting glass glares.¹⁹

Decoration techniques in the workshop and sales

Distinctive characteristics in mount decoration styles often reflect the country of origin. This is exemplified in the commonly adopted Polish terminology for different types of *passe-partout*. For instance, the term “English *passe-partout*” denotes a simple framing devoid of decorations or featuring only a gilded window cut. Meanwhile, a “French *passe-partout*” is recognized for concentric frames and gilded borders. The particularly deep “Viennese *passe-partout*,” as previously mentioned, showcases window edges and surfaces that are often adorned with various papers.²⁰

A straightforward method of embellishing a card with an affixed drawing was to encircle it with concentric lines drawn in ink or pen. These lines could vary

¹⁹ M. B. Cohn, *Wash and Gouache, A study of the Development of the Materials of Watercolor*, Cambridge 1977, p. 59.

²⁰ <http://leksykon.oprawoznawczy.ukw.edu.pl/index.php/Passe-partout> [access: December 5, 2023].

in thickness, and in some instances, the spaces between them were delicately enhanced with watercolor. In the 18th century, alongside the blue boards with black concentric lines and a frequently added gilded stripe popularized by Mariette, cream or white boards with black lines, green, gray, or blue washes, and occasionally an extra gilded stripe became prevalent. From the Biedermeier era onward, the color palette of boards expanded significantly, although the hues were generally subdued to avoid overshadowing the drawing. Additional elements on the boards, such as the aforementioned gilded stripes or engraved borders, were also common. According to Carlo James, the tradition of filling the spaces between inked borders with drawn ornaments originated in Italy. This practice may have inspired the creation of paper strips with ornamentation, reflecting graphic techniques and used to line the frame around a drawing or print. An intriguing early instance of using such “movable” borders for custom collation can be found in the 15th-century series of prints by Florentine engraver Francesco Rosselli (1445–pre-1513). In this series, a set of borders was sold along with the graphic representation, allowing users to cut and compose them by hand in various configurations²¹. Engraved borders for assembling boards were employed in the graphic and drawing collection of King Stanislaw Augustus (1732–1798). Approximately 40 types of borders and over 100 types of rosettes for corners were utilized for board decoration, likely crafted locally in Warsaw²². However, the practice of adorning collection assembly boards with engraved paper strips appears to be quite rare. One of the few known examples is the collection of Giacomo Durazzo (1717–1794), where the edges of the drawings are encircled by strips of paper with a single printed line, complemented by additional squares with stars at the corners.²³

²¹ S. Boorsch, *Framed in fifteenth-century Florence*, “Metropolitan Museum Journal” 2002, vol. 37, p. 35–40.

²² M. Laszczkowski, *Graphics in the decoration of modern interiors...*, ed. cit., p. L.

²³ C. James, C. Corrigan, M. Ch. Enshaian, MR Greca, *Old Master Prints and Drawings...*, ed. cit., p. 15. Three of these drawings, from Berlin and Kassel, were presented at the exhibition

The historical use of gilding on boards reveals itself through various forms, including gold powder or flakes directly applied to the backing, but more commonly, through the use of adhered gilded paper strips. Gilding paper, and previously parchment, has a longstanding tradition with numerous applications. Text sheets were adorned with gilded elements such as illuminated initials, miniatures, and manuscript borders. Gold was employed in decorating important documents as well. Jędrzej Kitowicz's excerpt from *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III* (Description of customs during the reign of August III) attests to the popularity and, presumably, affordability of such document decoration: "It was wise, according to unlearned people, [...] when a patent or a liberated letter was written in large letters and its edges were covered with a wreath of painted gold"²⁴. In France, gilding found its way into the decoration of collectors' montages from the early 17th century. Descriptions of these decorations often make it challenging to discern whether gilding was directly applied to the board paper or if gilded paper strips were pasted on. According to Carlo James, Pierre-Jean Mariette utilized strips of gilded paper, but this practice may not be as evident in descriptions of other French collections. In English collections, the gilded strip around a print or drawing was often painted directly on the board using powdered gold mixed with a binder²⁵. Closer examples, such as the montages of the *Metamorfozy* (Metamorphoses) graphics series from Stanisław August's collection in Łazienki Park's White House, feature strips of gold paper affixed around the graphics²⁶. From the early 19th century

of paintings and drawings by Paolo Veronese in Verona in 2014: P. Veronese, *L'illusione Della realtà*, ed. P. Marini, B. Aikema, Milano 2014, p. 148, 192, 338. Unfortunately, only the drawing on page 338 is presented in the catalog with the stripes.

²⁴ J. Kitowicz, *Opis obyczajów za panowania Augusta III*, Wrocław 2010, vol. 1, p. 71.

²⁵ C. James, C. Corrigan, M. Ch. Enshaian, M. R. Greca, *Old Master Prints and Drawings...*, ed. cit., p. 2–36.

²⁶ K. Jędrzyk, *Konserwacja 95 rycin ilustrujących Metamorfozy Owidiusza*, in: *Metamorfozy. Królewska kolekcja grafiki Stanisława Augusta*, exhibition catalog of the Royal Łazienki Museum in Warsaw, ed. J. Talbierska, Warszawa 2013, p. LVII.

onward, fashion leaned towards gilded strips additionally embossed with ornamental patterns. As a substitute for gold, an alloy of copper and zinc known as schlagmetal gained popularity in the 19th century. Paper strips covered with gold or schlagmetal were crafted by bookbinders in their workshops, but by the 19th century, they were commercially available, produced, for instance, by wallpaper manufacturers. In Warsaw, suppliers of ready-made strips, known as borders, included the Vienna-based Paper Upholstery Factory (which operated from 1829 as Spoerlin and Rahn, from 1830 Spoerlin, Rahn and Wertheim, from 1838 Rahn, Wertheim and Vetter²⁷) The company participated in the Exhibitions of Productivity of the Kingdom of Poland in 1837, 1838 and 1841. In 1838, it exhibited “100 different colored papers, pressed, gilded and silvered, for book-binding and haberdashery work, 36 kinds of borders in various patterns pressed and gilded”²⁸. And in 1841, among other things, “borders pressed and gilded in patterns, of various widths”²⁹.

As previously mentioned, with the introduction of deep *passe-partout*, the immediate window edge surrounding the drawing was frequently adorned with gilding. Pinpointing the initiation of this technique is challenging, but evidence suggests its presence in the 1863 offering from the English company Winsor & Newton, which included nine ready-made *passe-partout* options featuring gilded slanted edges around the window.³⁰

Throughout the discussed period, the practice of storing drawings, particularly graphics, on undecorated boards or cards persisted. An illustration of intentionally undecorated *passe-partout* can be observed in the British Museum’s approach to framing collections – utilizing cream cardboard with the author’s

²⁷ M. Ciechańska, *Papierowe obicia ścienne pałacu w Wilanowie. Studium portretowe*, Warsaw 2010, p. 65–70.

²⁸ A. M. Drexlerowa, *Wystawy wytwórczości Królestwa Polskiego*, Warsaw 1999, p. 307.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 342.

³⁰ S. Jaques, *A glance at the history of display and mounting of British watercolors*, “The Paper Conservator” 2000, vol. 24, p. 35–43.

name embossed in gold, a practice that continues today. By the late 19th century, *passe-partout* decoration had fallen out of favor in most countries, only to experience a resurgence in the 1920s³¹.

Contractors and clients

Boards or albums were commissioned by collectors and museum institutions, and there are early instances of dealers mounting drawings to enhance their appeal to buyers. An example from the second half of the 18th century is the mounting of French marshal, expert, and publisher Guillame Jean Constantin (1755–1816)³². In the 19th century, amid the popularity of incorporating drawings into interior design, mounts were crafted in framing and bookbinding workshops. This is substantiated by advertisements from bookbinders found in the press of the time. In Poland, for instance, one of the preeminent bookbinders from the first half of the 19th century, Karol Bagiński, is known to have engaged in this practice.

Numerous legends and indications propose that collectors or individuals assembling collections affixed their drawings to boards or inserted them into albums. However, considering the extensive nature of graphic and drawing collections, it appears that the actual craftsmen responsible were artisan bookbinders, operating under the oversight of the collector. A well-documented example in this regard is the construction of the Wilanów graphic collection, undertaken by bookbinder Michał Tuchowicz (d. 1850), commissioned and supervised by Aleksander Potocki (1778–1845)³³.

31 A. Donnithorne, *Mounting...*, ed. cit., 1996, p. 239; M. Kosek, *Conservation mounting...*, ed. cit., 2009, p. 7.

32 J. Jacoby, *Guillame Jean Constantin 1755–1816. A drawings dealer in Paris*, Paris 2018.

33 K. Garczewska-Semka, *The History and Techniques of Mounting the Graphic Art Collection from Wilanów (1834–1845)*, "Polish Libraries" 2019, vol. 7, p. 128–243.

Mounts of drawings by Jan Piotr Norblin from the collection of the Royal Castle in Warsaw

Of the 57 Norblin drawings collected at the Royal Castle in Warsaw, as many as 52 have been previously framed with glass, of which 20 drawings are mounted on decorated boards and 30 in *passe-partout* (of which three drawings are on decorated boards hidden under *passe-partout*), while five have historic frames without *passe-partout*. The French *passe-partout* type definitely predominates, often with gilding and cartouches – 21 objects, in the English type *passe-partout*, there are 9 – three of them: *Żyd balwierz*, *Domokrążca żydowski* (The Jewish barber, The Jewish peddler) and *Bitwa* (The Battle) in deep *passe-partout* with a gilded edge, and a series of drawings *Historia rodziny Krasińskich* (The history of the Krasiński family) in a simple *passe-partout* without decorations. Notably, there is an absence of Vienna *passe-partout* in the entire collection.

Unfortunately, contextualizing the creation of framings in Jan Piotr Norblin's Castle drawing collection proves challenging at present³⁴. As a result, only the technical characteristics can be utilized for dating purposes. Moreover, the decorative elements of the frames do not provide clear attribution cues. The continuous use of decorated boards and *passe-partout* in France complicates precise dating.

³⁴ Unfortunately, the volume of the exhibition catalog regarding the collection of drawings by Jan Piotr Norblin has not been published, some of the information will be published in Marta Zdańkowska article in the "Biuletyn Historii Sztuki", some data can be found in the general study of the drawings of the Ciechanowiecki Family Foundation, but the provenance of J. P. Norblin's drawings is not provided here, except for the drawing *Łuk grecki i świątynia Diany w Arkadii nieborowskiej*, which comes from the collection of Helena Radziwiłł in Nieborów: J. Guze, A. Dzieciołowski, *Rysunki i akwarele. Katalog zbiorów*, Warsaw 1994, p. 176. Magdalena Białonowska, in her study on the activities of Andrzej Ciechanowiecki, states that some of Norblin's drawings come from the artist's legacy, put up at auction after his death in 1830 and purchased by the Czartoryski family. However, the author does not specify which drawings she is talking about: M. Białonowska, *Andrzej Stanisław Ciechanowiecki. Kolekcjoner, marszałek, mecenas*, Warsaw 2012, p. 228.

Most of the *passe-partouts* were most likely created in the second half of the 19th or the first half of the 20th century, while the series *Historia rodziny Krasińskich* (History of the Krasiński family) was most likely mounted in the second half of the 20th century³⁵. In cases of mounting on boards, an earlier date of the framing can theoretically be assumed.

An intriguing example of a historical montage on a card with a cut-out aperture, featuring the drawing pasted with all edges to the edges of the window (known as artificial margins), is the object *Dwaj jeźdźcy* (Two Horsemen) (ZKW/6204/a). The mounting card was crafted from handmade paper, similar in thickness to the drawing's paper, with a visible fragment of a watermark (a crown) on one of the margins. The montage was executed with meticulous care, involving beveling the edges of the window before pasting the drawing. A double border was drawn around the drawing in brown ink (photo 1). While not conclusive, the similarity in paper thickness between the artificial margins and the drawing may suggest that the object was previously mounted in an album. When framed, this mounting was concealed under the French *passe-partout*.

On the adorned backing, the drawing *Odpoczywający wojownik* (A Resting Warrior) (ZKW/6203/a) was also mounted. In this instance, the backing was likely cut from a larger sheet, as indicated by the trimmed ink frame lines.

Among the drawings on backings, two particularly noteworthy objects are mounted on small signed boards, a practice that was uncommon. These drawings are *Straż przed zamkową bramą* (Guard in front of the castle gate) (ZKW/5711/a) and *Biwak przed zamkową bramą* (Bivouac in front of the castle gate) (ZKW/5712/a). Embossed initials "FR" can be found below the lower right corner of both drawings (photo 2a, b). In Frits Lugt's 1921 catalog, this mark was cataloged as number 1042 and initially attributed to an unknown

³⁵ The series was presented at an exhibition at the Pod Blachą Palace in 1989, the frames could have been created at that time: *Selection of works of art from Poland and related to Poland from the collections of the Ciechanowiecki Foundation*, exhibition catalogue, Warsaw 1989, No. 167.



Fot. 1.

Dwaj jeźdźcy [Two riders] – drawing on a board with an aperture cut inside (artificial margins), Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/6204/a, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring

French bookbinder or book collector, Fletcher Raincock of Liverpool. By 1956, the correct name had been identified as François Renaud, and by 2010, it had been comprehensively documented in the Custodia Foundation search engine.



Fot. 2a.

Straż przed zamkową bramą [Guard at the Castle gate] – drawing on a signed board,
Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/5711/a, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring



Fot. 2b.

*Straż przed zamkową
bramą* (ZKW/5711/a) –
fragment with initials

François Renaud was a Parisian dealer and restorer of drawings and prints active in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He specialized in selling and mounting drawings on signed backings, typically using blue paper with a white border around the drawing and a gilded band³⁶. Numerous such mounts can be found in French collections, with Polish museums retaining at least one drawing framed by this dealer. Professor Bohdan Marconi cites the collection of engravings of King Stanislaw August and the watercolor by Hubert Robert in the National Museum in Warsaw as an example of historical montages that should not be disassembled, mounted by the workshop of François Renaud³⁷. Justyna Guze also referenced the same object in a discussion about the importance of addressing the issue of collection mounting³⁸. Both Castle drawings in question were framed in gilded frames, bearing the sticker of Alphonse Giroux et Compagne. Alphonse Giroux (1776–1848), a former pupil of Jacques-Louis David, operated an art restoration workshop and also sold various painting materials, paper, gilded borders, frames, and furniture³⁹.

Another intriguing instance of mounting on a backing, and a rather surprising one, involves the *Handlarz żydowski* (A Jewish Trader) drawing (ZKW/6207/a). Initially, prior to conservation efforts, it seemed to be mounted with low-quality 20th-century materials. The face of the backing was covered with taped strips of brown paper, while the reverse side was entirely pasted onto cream cardboard. However, during the conservation process, not only was the previously obscured

³⁶ <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr/detail.cfm/marque/7038/total/1> [access: December 5, 2023].

³⁷ B. Marconi, *Zagadnienia estetyczne w konserwacji papieru i pergaminu*, in: *Konserwacja papieru i pergaminu*, "Biblioteka Muzealnictwa i Ochrony Zabytków", serie B, t. 24, Warsaw 1969, p. 19.

³⁸ J. Guze, *Rysunek jako wyraz gustu i jako element wystroju wnętrza w połowie XVIII w. Komunikat*, in: *Rozważania o smaku artystycznym. Studies*, ed. J. Poklewski, TF de Rosset, Toruń 2002, p. 115–119.

³⁹ <http://www.marquesdecollections.fr/detail.cfm/marque/13353>; slogan regarding his son André [access: September 10, 2023].

notation discovered beneath the drawing (misleadingly attributing the authorship of the drawing to Norblin, “the musician”), but it was also revealed that the mount was constructed from three layered sheets of manuscript pasted together. One side was covered with green paper featuring an inked border, while the other side was obscured with cream paper. These cards likely originated from some census during the French Revolution, as they bear the names of the revolutionary months. Throughout the conservation process, the cards were separated, documented, and then reassembled into the form of a backing (photo 3a, b). The use of recycled paper cards was a common practice in bookbinding factories to produce cardboard for book covers. Such covers were introduced to Europe from Islamic countries and gained popularity from the late 15th to the 19th centuries⁴⁰.

The drawing mount of *Lalkarz* (The Puppeteer) (ZKW/6218/a) is notable for its meticulous craftsmanship, particularly the striking cartouche. The varying shades of blue in the background were achieved through watercolor washing, evident from the elevated drawing mounted at the top edge on hinges. However, the manner of this mounting suggests that the backing was likely created no earlier than the early 20th century.

There is a noticeable similarity in the decoration of the framing for both *Scena w parku Tuileries* (Scene in the Tuileries Park) (ZKW/6185/a) and *Scena batalistycznej z wybuchającym jaszczem* (Battle Scene with an exploding ammunition truck) (ZKW/6199/a), featuring cream-green margins with a decorative cartouche: one on the backing (Scene in the Park), the other on the *passepertout* (photos 4, 5). It is plausible that both drawings were mounted by the same workshop because, in the *Scena batalistyczna* (Battle Scene), the heavily damaged margins had to be concealed – the drawing was previously affixed to a backing, the margins of which were adorned with an ink frame and strips of blue paper. The blue paper appears to have been torn off, with only small

⁴⁰ A. Zawisza, *Kompaturki – nowe podejście do problemu*, “Notes Konserwatorski” 2012, no. 15, p. 149.



Fot. 3a.
Handlarz żydowski
[A Jewish merchant] –
drawing on a board,
Royal Castle in Warsaw –
Museum, no. ZKW/6207/a,
photo by M. Niewiadomska,
A. Ring



Fot. 3b.
Handlarz żydowski
(ZKW/6207/a) –
one of the board's
component cards



Fot. 4.

Cartouche from the board of *Scena w parku Tuileries* [Scene in the Tuileries Garden], Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/6185/a, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring



Fot. 5.

Cartouche from the *passe-partout* of *Scena batalistyczna z wybuchającym jaszczem* [Battle scene with and exploding caisson], Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/6199/a, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring

fragments preserved. Examination of the paper fibers revealed the presence of linen with a small admixture of cotton⁴¹. The absence of wood pulp suggests that this was likely traditionally handmade rag pulp paper. Similarly, remnants of blue paper are found in the margins of the drawing *Autoportret* (Self-Portrait) (ZKW/5858/a). This is indicative of the common practice of disassembly drawings, often done when a new owner seeks to harmonize the introduced item with the entire collection. In the case of museum institutions accepting drawings into their collections, this represented a form of systematization, either by introducing mounts of standard formats (although such projects were typically not fully realized due to the extensive nature of graphic collections) or simply because the previous frame was damaged or destroyed. These traces now serve

⁴¹ K. Królikowska-Pataraja, *Analiza składu włóknistego próbek papierów oraz badanie wybranych próbek pergaminu rysunków z Zamku Królewskiego w Warszawie*, Warsaw 2022.

as evidence of the initial presentation of the drawings, which, in the case of the two mentioned objects, likely constituted their first form of mounting. During the conservation of these drawings, remnants of paper were retained, offering insights into their original appearance. However, in both cases, it was essential to carefully preserve the French *passe-partout* covering them.

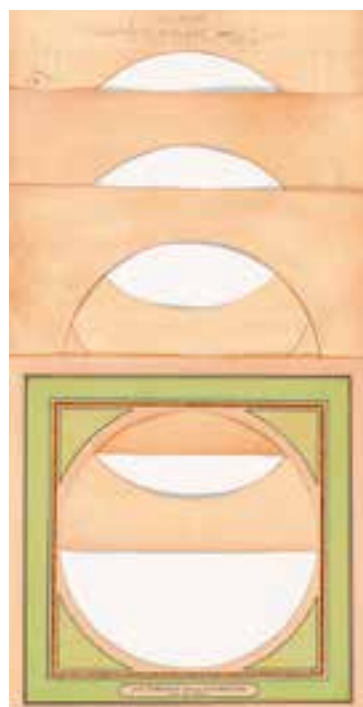
As previously mentioned, as time progressed, mass-produced, commercially available cardboard began to be utilized for framing purposes. Two main types of cardboards were manufactured: initially, from the 16th century, pasted boards consisting of multiple layers of paper adhered together (*paste boards*), and subsequently, from the 17th century, boards poured from pulp (*millboard*) – less refined and developed than the material used for paper production (often containing fragments of inaccurately ground rags, ship's ropes, and impurities). Additionally, a technique combining the above methods was employed for mounting boards, wherein the pulp core was covered on both sides with higher-quality paper⁴². However, for the current state of preservation of these cardboards, the most crucial factor is not the production method but the raw materials from which they were derived. The issue of acidified paper is already well-recognized (thanks in part to the “Acid Paper” program). The *passe-partout* for the *Autoportret* (Self-Portrait) was crafted from highly contaminated and acidified cardboard. During conservation, it was discovered to be made of 4-ply cardboard, appearing to be its older and more refined form. However, upon analyzing the composition of the sheets, it became apparent that each sheet contained 50% wood pulp and conifer pulp⁴³ (photos 6a and 6b). In the course of conservation, the three bottom layers (preserved in the conservation documentation) were removed and replaced with archival-quality cardboard, onto which the face layer of the *passe-partout* with a decorative frame was affixed.

42 S. Jaques, *A brief survey of paper board and some of the literature describing it with some definitions of marketing terms for mount boards used in conservation*, “The Paper Conservator” 1999, vol. 23, p. 2–3.

43 K. Królikowska-Pataraja, *Analiza składu włóknistego próbek papierów...*, ed. cit.



Fot. 6a.
Autoportret [Self-portrait] – drawing
in a *passe-partout*,
Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum,
no. ZKW/5858/a, photo by M. Niewia-
domska, A. Ring



Fot. 6b.
Autoportret (ZKW/5858/a) – *passe-partout* cardboard
component cards

The *passe-partout* for the drawing *Scena z wybuchającym jaszczem* (*Scene with an exploding ammunition truck*) underwent a similar process. This *passe-partout* was composed of cardboard with a core of low-quality wood pulp, covered on the exterior with higher-quality paper. Once again, the facing paper was retained, while the bottom layers were replaced with archival cardboard.

The extent of damage that can be inflicted by a *passe-partout* crafted from low-quality materials is evident in the preservation condition of the drawing titled *Targ na konie* (*Horse market*) (ZKW/5704). Extensive coverage along the edges, particularly noticeable in the sky portion, partially obscured the drawing. The paper in direct contact with the *passe-partout* exhibited significant brown-ing, with its degradation even more pronounced in the photograph under UV light (photos 7a and 7b).

Additional damage caused by the type of cardboard specifically designed for *passe-partout*, featuring a core of poor-quality pulp covered on two sides with good paper, is the formation of dark lines along the edges of the *passe-partout*. This effect was noticeable in the drawings of the *Historia rodziny Krasieńskich* (*History of the Krasinski Family*) series. These marks indicate that the drawings were shifted within the mount or mounted multiple times (photo 8).

Throughout the exhibition, a layer of museum cardboard with a window cut-out, slightly extended in relation to the original framing, was used to isolate all *passe-partout* from the objects. This method provided protection to the surface of the drawings against harmful factors from both the surface and cross-section of the original *passe-partout*. Following the exhibition, the drawings and frames are stored separately, with the drawings placed in acid-free paper envelopes and the frames kept alongside the *passe-partout*.



Fot. 7a.

Targ na konie [Horse fair] – drawing in a *passe-partout*,

Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/5704, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring



Fot. 7b.

Targ na konie [Horse fair] – photography in UV light, without *passe-partout*,

Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/5704, photo by R. Stasiuk



Fot. 8.

Historia rodziny Krasieńskich. Śmierć Jakuba Krasieńskiego w bitwie pod Parkanami I [History of the Krasieński family. Death of Jakub Krasieński in the battle of Párkányi I] – darkened lines at the edges of the window in the *passe-partout*,

Royal Castle in Warsaw – Museum, no. ZKW/6192/a, photo by M. Niewiadomska, A. Ring

End

This article does not aim to provide an exhaustive review of drawing object framing methods. The author wanted to share observations resulting from conservation practice, as well as her longstanding interest in the issue of framing drawings.

It's crucial to acknowledge that today's often damaged cardboard frames may be remnants of broader phenomena beyond individual owner preferences. An example here is the debate that took place in England in the mid-19th century among art critics about the color of mounting and frames: white versus gold. This discussion centered on the framing of watercolors at annual summer exhibitions from 1823, traditionally presented in elaborately decorated gilded frames, versus the winter exhibition of 1862, which introduced a simple white

frame for the first time⁴⁴. While technical solutions are not the focus here, this example provides insight into how broader sociological contexts can influence remnants of past fixtures. Another instance is the method of mounting a drawing on a board, a topic explored in a separate article. Even seemingly minor details, such as where to attach the paper strips (known as hinges) used to mount the drawing on the board, were significant for the organizers of engraving cabinets. Lengthy disputes arose about whether to place them at the right or left margin, or perhaps at the top⁴⁵.

Although old *passe-partout* often lose their aesthetic value or even pose risks to the enclosed works of art, preserving them is worthwhile, considering the centuries-old tradition of their creation. In recent years, there has been a growing trend to showcase not only drawing objects but also old mounts at exhibitions. This is a manifestation of a more general tendency to minimize the impact of conservation activities on historical matter.

44 S. Jaques, *A glance at the history of display and mounting of British watercolors*, "The Paper Conservator" 2000, vol. 24, p. 35–43.

45 K. Garczewska-Semka, *The outline of the History of Mounting Art on Paper in Poland in the 19th and 20th centuries*, "Restaurator" 2019, 40 (3–4).