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**Two forgotten star of painting collections in Wrocław (Breslau), or, A few words about life and works of Christian Johann Bendeler (1688-1728)**

In: *Orbis artium : k jubileu Lubomíra Slavíčka*. Kroupa, Jiří (editor); Šeferisová Loudová, Michaela (editor); Konečný, Lubomír (editor). Vyd. 1. Brno: Masarykova univerzita, 2009, pp. 219-233

ISBN 9788021049727

Stable URL (handle): <https://hdl.handle.net/11222.digilib/123956>

Access Date: 29. 11. 2024

Version: 20220831

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THE FORGOTTEN STAR OF PAINTING COLLECTIONS  
IN WROCLAW (BRESLAU), OR A FEW WORDS ABOUT  
LIFE AND WORKS OF CHRISTIAN JOHANN BENDELER  
(1688–1728)\*

ANDRZEJ KOZIEŁ

If we were to judge the ranks of the artists active in Wrocław by considering Daniel Gomolcky's *Des kurzgefaßten Inbegriffs der vornehmsten Merckwürdigkeiten in der Kayser- und Königl. Stadt Breslau in Schlesien* – the basis for our knowledge of this city from the beginning of eighteenth century – it would appear that it had been neither Michael Willmann, nor Johann Michael Rottmayr, neither of the artists employed by the Bishop of Wrocław, nor the one belonging to the painters' guild of the city, but Christian Johann Bendeler, a landscape painter. It was to him and to his oeuvre that Gomolcky, following Johann Stenzel's account, devoted two and a half pages of his book, whereas the other artists and their works are most often left with just one-sentence notices. And this was Bendeler and his works that Gomolcky wrote about with the greatest approval, not to be found within the notes about other artists. For Bendeler in his art was said to approach perfection – “*von Gott und der Natur mit einer umsonst geschenckten hohen Gnade begabet*” like no other painter in the whole world he was able to imitate nature “*mit so empfindlichen Merckmalen einer Art der Erschaffung*”. And these were exactly his works thanks for which “*unter allen Künsten und Wissenschaften heutiger Welt, absonderlich die edle Mahler=Kunst*

*auf das höchste gestiegen, und als ein Stern der ersten Grösse vor andern hervor blincket*”.<sup>1</sup> Allow us to pose a question, who was this admired and praised painter?

The basic source of information on Bendeler's life and work still remains a monographic article of 1784 published by Johann Ernst Stieff<sup>2</sup>, a renowned doctor and naturalist from Wrocław, that appeared in the *Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts* journal, edited by Johann Georg Meusel. It comes as a reliable account as – according to the author himself – his long text of 1754 was based mainly upon some spoken and written records about the artist, taken from Johann Stenzel, the already mentioned teacher of French language from Wrocław, also the painter's friend and the greatest patron.

As we learn from this account, Bendeler was an extraordinary man in all aspects. He was born on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1688 in Quedlinburg. His father, Johann Philipp (1654–1709) was a cantor, initially in a castle church, later on in a local parish church, and since 1681 he also became a teacher in a local gymnasium. He played the organ and was a well-known theoretician of organ construction, an author of a work entitled *Organopopeia* (Leipzig 1690)<sup>3</sup> among the others. However, Bendeler the son did not follow his father. Al-

though Bendeler Senior planned a career of a scholar for his son, Christian Johann got attracted to drawing and painting as early as in his childhood and so deep, it was impossible to draw him away from this. He was said to scribble and draw landscapes he created with the force of his own imagination as he had no approach to etchings and paintings. When eventually the father appreciated his son's rare skill, he longed to manage on his own the junior's artistic education and set it in systematised knowledge. This father's strict care led to nothing but a juvenile rebellion and eventually Christian Johann left his parents' house and set on the journey in search of the place where he could continue his self-education. Erfurt at last became the place where he exchanged a pen for a brush and commenced painting pictures. One of the local painters was even said to offer Bendeler some free painting lessons in his workshop, which were turned down by the latter in favour of his self-education. Only with the help of a handbook on preparing and using paints Bendeler started painting some philosophers' heads, straightaway obtaining excellent results. His "heads" gained such an acclaim that the painter was offered at once from ten to as much as sixteen guilders for a single work. Bendeler, however, gave up this kind of painting and devoted himself to painting his own favourite landscapes, in which he mastered his skills at imitating nature. In a few years only he made such a progress in this field that he became an independent painter.

Bendeler was an exceptionally mobile artist. Right after he had run away from his family house in Quedlinburg the young artist was said to wander around many towns but he stayed there for a short time only as he was afraid of his rapacious father being able to trace him down. Erfurt was the first place he stayed in for a longer period and commenced painting. Nevertheless, he soon left the town

and headed for Leipzig where he dwelt in a house belonging to one of the king's ministers, who was known for his habit of inviting artists to stay at his place in turn for their works. In the meantime Bendeler travelled to Dresden to the court of the Saxon elector and Polish king, August II the Strong, who offered him a job of a court painter. In 1713 the painter decided to leave Leipzig and headed for Silesia, to Bierutów (Bernstadt), invited by Wilhelmina Lutzia of Sachsen-Meiningen, the Princess of Oleśnica (Oels), who paid yet thirty ducats for the artist's journey. Still he did not stay there for a long time and soon was sent away in the princess's own carriage to Wrocław. This was the place Bendeler settled for good eventually, and – according to Stieff – remained there until his death.

Bendeler was quickly acclaimed as an excellent landscape painter. Soon after he had arrived in Erfurt, the young Bendeler was said to rouse the common admiration and delight of the local artists with his juvenile landscapes, drawn with a pen and ink at that time. His painted landscapes evoked similar reactions. They were admired by art lovers in every town where Bendeler stopped, they were also appreciated by some crowned heads to name but August II the Strong. Gomolcky agrees with Stieff as it comes to Bendeler's great appreciation for his exceptional skills at faithful imitating the changing nature. No one but Bendeler was able to reflect in a painting various seasons of the year, times of the day and night. He appeared as the sheer master in picturing nature during some meteorological anomalies, e.g. sea-storms, heavy rains or thunderstorms.

Bendeler's mastership was said to be proved also by some anecdotes as, for instance, the one about an appreciated painter from Wrocław who was supposed to notice some errors demanding the correction in the two of Bendeler's exquisite landscapes. The painter, though separated in

his opinion, went to Bendeler and offered him no less than twenty-four ducats for erasing the indicated faults. Bendeler, however, was said to mock the critic's stupidity and made notes on the reverse of the landscapes: "*Ich bin unter die Mörder gefallen*" and "*Wer kann mich ohne Mitleid anschauen?*" The other time Bendeler made the court painter of the Bishop of Wrocław, Francis Louis of Pfalz-Neuburg feel ashamed during the visit at the latter's atelier. The host artist was right at painting a nocturnal landscape and was complaining about the inability of depicting the moonlight. Bendeler was said to laugh in turn and proposed the painter that he would demonstrate how the moonlight should have been painted. When the host agreed he sat down behind the easel and within a few hours he painted the shining moon in such a faithful and natural way that he not only put the bishop's painter to shame but he also roused the latter's patron's, the Bishop's of Wrocław, admiration.

Bendeler in reaching such a high level of art was helped by a peculiar quality of his eyes and extraordinary erudition. According to Stieff, the painter had two different eyes with one of them similar to a cat's eye. Bendeler was supposed to ensure everyone that he could see with this eye in the darkness. Moreover, this eye enabled the painter to see clearer, especially outdoors, what was about to effect the said admired, outstanding faithfulness in imitating nature. This unusual gift was accompanied by the artist's exceptional erudition. Stieff stressed that one was able to learn a lot from the artist while discussing such different subjects as history, statistics, mathematics, mechanics or organ construction. Bendeler was even said to co-write with Stenzel a few articles: on cruelty Christ had experienced before his death on the cross, pagan religions, Turks' advantage, vanity of earth fame, the incorrect use of the French king, Louis XIV's, victories or trade actions

on the areas behind the Mississippi River among the others. Nevertheless, such wide knowledge and his mind's shrewdness made Bendeler a sceptic – he found problems in everything, he believed in nothing he had not learnt on his own and he was constantly overwhelmed with a feeling of despair.

Despite the fame of an excellent landscape painter, Bendeler suffered all his life from the lack of money. Although he had quickly learnt how to make a living out of painting pictures, he used to lose the money in taverns and wineshops. According to Stieff's account, Bendeler lived a "joyful" life and, however, he did not enjoy balls and dances, he often preferred having a good time with his friends to painting pictures. He sat down behind the easel most frequently when he was forced to by his financial situation. Then he painted quickly one or two pictures and, benefiting from the fame of an excellent landscape painter, sold them at very high prices to the queuing art lovers.

There is no doubt that Bendeler's problems with the lack of money would have been far less serious, if he had been able – even considering his lifestyle – to cope with his would-be patrons. All his life was a series of unreasonably rejected, lucrative work offers. Already during his stay in Leipzig Bendeler refused August II the Strong who called the painter to his court in Dresden, had a nice chat with him and offered the painter an annual salary of 1000 thalers if only Bendeler agreed to paint for the king. Bendeler was expected to provide the royal gallery with four pictures a year, and any more works than four he would paint were supposed to be paid additionally. The artist, already used to high prices for his pictures and to art lovers' endeavours to get his works, turned down the proposition decidedly, assuming that the offered honorarium of 1000 thalers for four pictures is too low. After he had come back to Leipzig, Bende-

ler turned the king's minister, whose place he lived at in turn for painting pictures, against himself. Not only did Bendeler arrive at meals barefoot, wearing a dirty dressing-gown and smoking a pipe full of black tobacco, but also he painted pictures very long and reluctantly. When he managed to complete his first work of rather small size (1/2 elbow by 3/4 elbow), the next five weeks he did nothing: he would sleep till noon and after the meal he would take a rest and smoke tobacco. It was the minister's dissatisfaction that made him continue the work and complete another picture within three weeks. When the delighted patron, however, wanted to pay the high honorarium for the artist's work and made a mistake in counting – one ducat for the painter's loss, the artist in a burst of anger reached for the broadsword and completely destroyed the canvas. Later Bendeler indeed apologised to his benefactor and in conciliatory terms within ten weeks he painted for him "*mit unermüdetem Fleiße*" two other landscapes of the same size as the destroyed picture. Nevertheless, the minister was not going to hold the painter in his house any longer and expressed a polite farewell. Bendeler acted in a similar way in Bierutów, at the princes' of Oleśnica court where he was summoned to paint a portrait of the princess Wilhelmina Lutzia of Sachsen-Meiningen. When the work had been completed, the princess offered the painter only forty thalers, apologising at the same time for not being able to pay the great artist an appropriate sum high enough for his talent, he scattered the given money angrily round the room telling the princess to give them away to her servants, and to keep him in good memory.

It is not known what would happen to the light-headed and impulsive artist, if he had not met Johann Stenzel. He looked after Bendeler, when the latter, sent away to Wrocław by the princess of Oleśnica, got himself into

financial trouble again and was imprisoned for debts in the town hall of Wrocław for nine months. Stenzel not only helped the artist in many ways during his stay in prison, but also led to setting the painter free by repaying his creditors, whereupon he offered the artist maintenance and a place in his own house in return for painting four landscapes. Stenzel did not give up supporting the painter even when the latter, having found some new friends offering him large sums of money in exchange for the possibility of acquiring the admired landscapes, soon left his benefactor's house and in the second year of his stay in Wrocław got married and set up a family. Stenzel's help was still required as Bendeler returned to his light-headed lifestyle and did not care at all to secure his family. Unfortunately, this led to a sad ending of the painter and his family. On 15<sup>th</sup> November 1728 Bendeler got the left side of his body paralysed after a stroke, and a subsequent stroke four days later caused the artist death. Stenzel, who stayed at his dying friend's bed, buried him at his own expense on 20<sup>th</sup> November in the graveyard of St. Adalbert church in Wrocław.<sup>4</sup> The financially insecure widow after Bendeler lived mainly on charity, and his children were taken to an orphanage. None of them followed his father's steps and did not become an artist.

Such a close and long-lasting relationship between Stenzel and Bendeler caused the fact that the largest collection of the artist's works got just in his friend and benefactor's hands. According to Gomolcky's account, this commonly appreciated Stenzel's "*vortreffliche Landschaften=Cabinet*" was visited frequently by "*wahre Kenner und unpassionirte Künstler*". Stenzel, truly in love with Bendeler's pictures, cared about keeping the integrity of the collection. And though, as time went by, he got in financial trouble, he did not sell any of Bendeler's pictures out of his collection as long as he lived, despite the fact once

he was offered 2000 florins for only two landscapes. It was no sooner than after Stenzel's death that his collection was taken over by an unknown merchant of Wrocław in return for a lifelong pension for the collector's widow and finally passed to her son. Unfortunately, we do not know the details considering the number and the subjects of Bendeler's paintings constituting the collection.

Stieff writes far more about the artist's landscapes that belonged to his own collection. It was a set of five Bendeler's pictures, which – according to their owner's words – “[...] *viele Kenner, die mich besucht, allenthalben gar sehr bewundert haben*”. The first painting, being the size of eleven by fifteen inches, depicted a mountain scenery with high castles and towers on the rocks, from where a river in many meanders was flowing down to the valleys. The second painting, fourteen by sixteen inches in size, pictured the sea with some different kinds of ships, including trade ships, with an overcast sky spread above them with a realistic representation of the clouds. The third painting, of the exact same size as the latter one, pictured a winter landscape of a snow-covered area with some old castles and cottages and numerous skaters perfectly depicted while moving all over the ice-bound river. The fourth work with its size of nine by thirteen inches represented a mountain landscape with an old stone castle and another one seen in the background with its walls lighten up by a perfectly depicted thunderbolt, striking at the castle after having pierced the black clouds. Of the same size was the fifth painting showing the nocturnal river scenery. On the river there was a forge with a working blacksmith inside, and the darkness was brighten up by the perfectly captured light beaming from the forge and the full moon shining through the clouds.

The commonly admired Stenzel's collection and the set of the canvas belonging to

Stieff were not the only collections of Bendeler's paintings which existed in Wrocław in the 1720s and 1730s. According to Johann Christian Kundmann, Bendeler's works were the part of a distinguished art collection owned by prince Franz Adrian of Hatzfeldt, who kept in his palace in Wrocław as many as six landscape paintings by the artist.<sup>5</sup> Bendeler's works were also collected by the count Carl Johann Emmerich of Berg and Herrendorf, “*ein extraordinairer Kenner und Liebhaber von Curiositäten*”, who – following Gomolcky's words – expressed particular admiration for the artist's works.<sup>6</sup> Johann Georg Pauli, a medicine doctor from Wrocław also boasted about Bendeler's paintings. In his excellent collection of works of art he possessed as well excellent landscape drawings by the artist from Wrocław.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, another set of Bendeler's two landscapes were a part of the collection owned by Albrecht of Saebisch, the last president of The City Council of Wrocław, an art lover and a landscape painting connoisseur.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, what has remained till present out of this set of at least a dozen or so Bendeler's landscape paintings and drawings, that could be found in Wrocław collections in the time of Gomolcky and Kundmann, is only a tiny part. Still before the World War II in Silesia there were preserved the artist's ten landscape paintings. Oberschlesisches Museum in Gliwice (Gleitwitz) owned an exquisite collection of as many as eight Bendeler's landscapes, which – judging from the number of the pictures and their Wrocław origins – might have come from Stenzel's famous collection.<sup>9</sup> The set was made up by two small landscapes (both the sizes of 21 x 14 cm) painted on a copper plate and six larger oil paintings on canvas. Following Friedrich Heinevetter's description, the two pictures painted on the plate composed one set and represented similar landscapes filled with varied parts of



*Fig. 1: Christian Johann Bendeler, Landscape with an Open-Air Theatre, 1720, oil, canvas, Städtische Museen Quedlinburg / Schlossmuseum. Photo: Städtische Museen Quedlinburg / Schlossmuseum.*



*Fig. 2: Christian Johann Bendeler, Landscape with a Peasant Wedding, 1720, oil, canvas, Städtische Museen Quedlinburg / Schlossmuseum. Photo according to Friedrich Heinevetter, Johann Christian Bendeler, ein vergessener Maler, Gleiwitzer Jahrbuch 1928, fig. XVIII.*

trees, out of which emerged a castle tower, with figures in the foreground, and a sparkling lake, a flowing river and a stream becoming a waterfall in the background. The two of the oil paintings, signed and dated 1718, pictured a sunny mountain landscape with a hunter and a winter landscape lightened up by the moonshine.<sup>10</sup> The other four paintings, signed and dated 1720, depicted an open air theatre on the river with some village buildings [fig. 1], a view of a huge mediaeval castle with a peasant wedding in the foreground [fig. 2], a mountain landscape with a lot of human figures, an obelisk and a rainbow in the background [fig. 3] and a mountain landscape with a sarcophagus and a view of a village on the lake in the background [fig. 4]. Two other Bendeler's paintings were possessed by Schlesiŝches Museum der bildenden Künste in Wrocław. As it is stated in the museum catalogue description, the first of them pictured a wood scenery with the mountains in the background, numerous human figures and a herd of deer and roe-deer on the grass. The second was a pendant to the first one. Both were the sizes of 31 x 41 cm.<sup>11</sup>

In 1945 as many as five pictures from the pre-war Silesian collections disappeared with no trace left. The only Bendeler's work that survived in Silesia till present days we know about is *Landscape with a Sarcophagus* [fig. 4], preserved in the museum collection in Gliwice.<sup>12</sup> Four other works from the former Oberschlesiŝches Museum in Gliwice have been discovered in the collection of Schlossmuseum in Quedlinburg: *A Sunny Mountain Landscape with a Hunter*, *A Winterlandscape Lighten up by the Moonshine* [fig. 7] (both 1718) and *Landscape with an Open-Air Theatre*, *Landscape with a Peasant Wedding* (both 1720).<sup>13</sup> This irreparable loss is only partly made up by appearing of the three, earlier unknown, Bendeler's paintings on the art market. There were a seascape *Ships on the Shore*

*During a Sea-Storm*<sup>14</sup>, painted in 1712 before Bendeler's settling down in Wrocław, as well as the created already in Wrocław two canvases: *Landscape with the Peasant Resting on the Lakeshore*<sup>15</sup> and painted in 1718 picture with a mountain scenery.<sup>16</sup> The humble number of Bendeler's preserved and known works is completed by two drawings created in 1714 which are kept in the collection of Staatliche Museum in Schwerin: *Mountain Wood Landscape* and *Landscape with Rocks and a Castle View*<sup>17</sup> [figs. 5, 6].

As early as in 1755 Christian Ludwig Hagedorn wrote that Bendeler in his landscapes followed the works of Christoph Ludwig Agricola (1665–1724), a splendid German landscape painter, and the opinion was accepted by many subsequent authors,<sup>18</sup> nevertheless, it does not seem that this judgement was correct. The only common issue for Bendeler and Agricola was their preference to depict nocturnal scenes and weather anomalies as, for instance, thunderstorms or rainbows in their landscapes<sup>19</sup>. Both of the artists were regarded as the masters of this kind of landscape and being the rare artists specialising in this field of painting received great acclaim from the contemporary and following generations, what indeed could lead to search artistic dependences between the two painters. Bendeler, however, his admired skills might not have owed to Agricola, for – what we learn from the Silesian artist's biography – he did not have a chance to meet Agricola and as a self-educated man he had no workshop dependences on the artist.

The thesis also seems to be contradicted by the analysis of few known to us Bendeler's paintings and drawings. It reveals clearly that the Silesian artist headed his creation not towards the works of the contemporary artists, but in the direction of the achievements of the earlier artists, mainly those of the first half of seventeenth century. Bendeler paint-



ed his pictures in several, historicised conventions characteristic for landscape painting of the first half of “the Golden Age” what, after all, brought him his contemporaries’ appreciation. Gomolcky wrote in admiration, “[...] *er aller anderer berühmten Landschaftes = Mahler Geist und Manieren, nicht allein spielend, wenn es ihm nur ohngefähr eingefallen, zu imitiren sondern solche auch noch weit zu übertreffen, Capable war*”.<sup>20</sup>

It seems that the ideal that Bendeler particularly set his heart on was Netherlandish imaginative landscape of the end of sixteenth and the beginning of seventeenth centuries. The characteristic rough, high and steep limestone rocks, numerous picturesque gothic castles and fortresses placed on their tops and slopes, panoramic views of town buildings spreading in the background, as well as stage-like arranging of tall trees in wings, dividing the landscapes into separate parts, can be found most of all in both of Bendeler’s preserved drawings. All this indicates that the source of inspiration for the painter from Wrocław were the pictures of Netherlandish, mannerist landscape painters as, for instance, Joos de Momper the Younger, Pieter Stevens, or mostly Paul Brill.

The way Bendeler built the spatial construction of the depicted view is also common for him and the above mentioned generation of landscape painters: not basing on a correct perspective draft, but by putting subsequent flat plans with a high horizon, which made up something recalling a stage decoration for a figural scene, set in the foreground or in the central plan. As the examples of applying this type of the spatial disposition in the picture come not only in the drawings from Schwerin, e.g. *Rocky Landscape with a Castle View* with a flat wing of steep rocks “stuck all over” with some castles in the background, but also the only preserved in the Silesian collections Bendeler’s painting of *Landscape with a Sarcophagus* with

a depiction of a cascade of seven wing-like plans, seen in the right-hand part of the image. What is interesting, these obvious mistakes and the lack of consequence in Bendeler’s use of perspective rules were already pointed out by his first biographers.<sup>21</sup>

Bendeler was also familiar with a convention of the seventeenth-century Italianate pastoral landscape, of which the best examples we are able to find not only in the preserved *Landscape with a Sarcophagus*, but also in the lost *Landscape with a Rainbow*. The forgotten ancient sarcophagi or slim obeliscs covered with exuberant vegetation, a majestic mountain landscape bearing visible Mediterranean traits, brighten up with a setting sun, inhabited by groups of some accidental peasants and travellers, as well as some countryside buildings with flat roofs seen in the background, appear in his works and bear the closest analogies with Dutch italianists’ paintings, to name just a few: Cornelis van Poelenburgh, Herman van Swanevelt and Jan Both.

In the works we know Bendeler also imitated the popular seventeenth-century Dutch townscapes with some figural groups making up genre scenes. The works from Quedlinburg: *Landscape with an Open Air Theatre*, where in a realistic convention Bendeler depicted a view of some outskirts buildings near a river ferry crossing towards the town with two towers of a gothic church seen in the background, completed with a street theatre performance in the foreground, and *Landscape with a Peasant Wedding* with an image of a huge mediaeval castle with two towers and buildings of a borough stuck to it, making up a background for plenty of merrily playing guests of a peasant wedding, who gathered at and around the tables, come almost as clons of the Dutch and Flemish specialised landscape and genre painters, e.g. Egbert van der Poel, Jan Steen, David Vinckboons, or David Teniers I.



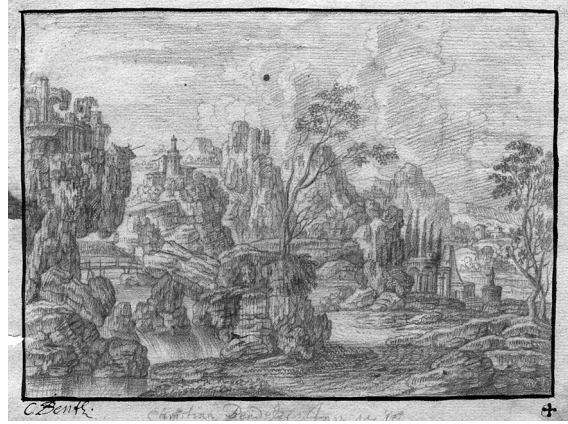
*Fig. 3: Christian Johann Bendeler, Landscape with a Rainbow, 1720, oil, canvas, lost. Photo: Friedrich Heinevetter, Johann Christian Bendeler, ein vergessener Maler, Gleiwitzer Jahrbuch 1928, fig. XIX.*



*Fig. 4: Christian Johann Bendeler, Landscape with a Sarcophagus, 1720, oil, canvas, Muzeum w Gliwicach. Photo: Muzeum w Gliwicach.*



*Fig. 5: Christian Johann Bendeler, Wood Landscape, chalk drawing, Staatliches Museum Schwerin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo: Staatliches Museum Schwerin.*



*Fig. 6: Christian Johann Bendeler, Rocky Landscape with a Castle View, 1714, coloured pencil drawing, Staatliches Museum Schwerin, Kupferstichkabinett. Photo: Staatliches Museum Schwerin.*



*Fig. 7: Christian Johann Bendeler, A Winterlandscape Lighten up by the Moonshine, 1718, oil, canvas, Städtische Museen Quedlinburg / Schlossmuseum. Photo: Städtische Museen Quedlinburg / Schlossmuseum.*

Although Bendeler declared himself as a self-taught man who never learnt from other artists, the character of his oeuvre, heading for a specific dialogue with old art, with the landscape painting deriving mostly from the first half of seventeenth century, he is very close to what was painted by the other Bendeler's contemporary landscape painters. Practising landscape painting conventions and stylistics of "the Golden Age", showing great skills: from imaginative mannerist landscape from the beginning of seventeenth century, through Italian-style pastoral landscape to realistic seventeenth-century Dutch and Flemish townscapes with genre figural groups is also characteristic for the oeuvre of the other landscape painters from the beginning of eighteenth century, e.g. Flemings: Jan Frans van Bloemen and Adrian Frans Boudewyns; an Austrian, Joseph Feistenberger, or Johann Jacob Hartmann and his sons: Franz Anton and Wenzel Johann active in Prague. Moreover, there are so close dependences between some of the works of the mentioned landscape painters and Bendeler's paintings, that we could claim the oeuvre of the artist from Wrocław follow the landscape painting tendencies of that time at its most.

In the case of Bendeler we can perceive this historical tendency of his landscape paintings also as deriving from his works' target. Almost all of them were created for private art collections. This similarity between his paintings and the works of "great masters" of landscape painting was most probably Bendeler's market strategy against his clients. As we learn from Gomolcky and Kundmann's descriptions, in painting collections in Wrocław in the 1720s and 1730s the works of the most important masters of European landscape paintings were gathered and they constituted usually a high percentage of a whole collection, and often decided the image of a particular collection.

Prince Franz Adrian of Hatzfeldt was proud of possessing in his collection two landscapes "*mit Soldaten und Bauern*" painted by Pieter Bruegel the Elder himself, one landscape by Roelant Savery, three next by Cornelis van Poelenburgh and as many as five landscapes by Jan Joost van Cossiau.<sup>22</sup> Another landscape by Savery was in the collection of count Georg Christoph of Proskau, who also owned four landscapes "*mit unzehlich vielen Figuren*" painted on a plate by Johann Hartmann.<sup>23</sup> Ernst Benjamin of Loewenstadt and Ronnenburg's collection was exceptionally rich with landscape painting. One could see the landscape "*wo ein Strohm zwischen Bergen flüßset, nebst vielen Dörffern, Schiffen, und mehr als 100 menschlichen Figuren*" by Hermann Sachtleben, and some pictures of other famous landscape painters, e.g. Nicolas Berchem, Ludolf Backhuysen, Anton Feistenberger, Christoph Ludwig Agricola, Jacob van Ruisdael, or Jan van der Heyden. Equally valuable was the landscape collection of Johann Georg Pauli, who was advised in his purchase by Johann Franz de Backer<sup>24</sup>, a former curator of the Tschernins' gallery in Prague, and since 1724 a court painter of the Bishop of Wrocław. In the collection there were gathered not only landscape paintings by such acknowledged masters as Sachtleben or David Teniers, but also a grand set of a hundred drawings of "*Gantz auselesene Original-Landschafften*", where one could find the works created by almost all significant European landscape painters: Adam Elsheimer, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, Savery, Peter Bruegel the Elder, Herman van Swanevelt, Sachtleben, Anthonie Waterloo, Antonio Tempesta, Pieter van Laer, Paul Brill, Joost de Momper, David Vinckboons, Esaias van de Velde, Jan van Goyen, Abraham Rademaker, Pieter Molyn and Michael Willmann<sup>25</sup> as well. As we can assume, landscape painting collecting was such a fashionable trend in those

days that even the collectors not specialising in works of art used to follow the tendency. Kundmann may come as a good example, as in his collection he gathered mainly *naturalia* and coins, nevertheless he owned four pairs of landscape paintings with some figural groups, painted on canvas by “*dem sehr berühmten Italiener Perrugini*”.<sup>26</sup>

Furthermore, the immense popularity of Bendeler’s landscape paintings in Wrocław, the common admiration and fame he enjoyed in the local artists’ milieu and among art lovers of Stenzel’s “*vortreffliche Landschaften=Cabinet*”, could have stimulated the collectors in Wrocław to get interested in landscape painting not only by great European masters, but also the one created by the artists contemporary to them and still alive. The profile of an excellent art collection made by the above mentioned Albrecht of Saebisch seems to indicate such a source of inspiration. The majority of the collection was gathered during his stay in Vienna in the years 1729–1732, when he had purchased some pictures from Christian Hilfgott Brand<sup>27</sup>, a local landscape painter. Saebisch’s collection of all together 321 works of art, included as many as 122 landscape paintings. What seems to be important, the works of contemporary to Saebisch Central European landscape painters predominated, there were pictures by the above mentioned Christoph Ludwig Agricola (3 pictures), by Josef Orient (4 pictures), Maximilian Schinnagel (10 pictures), Anton Faistenberger (5 pictures), Felix Meyer (2 pictures) or by Brand himself (14

pictures). The collection was completed also by other schools’ representatives, for instance Jan Griffier I (10 pictures).<sup>28</sup>

The art collections in Wrocław contributed to Bendeler’s success, but at the same time caused his later sinking in oblivion. The painter, who worked almost exclusively to fulfill the needs of private collectors, in practice became absent in the public iconosphere of the city. As long as Bendeler’s patrons and his art lovers lived, and his paintings were admired in their collections, the memory of this remarkable artist and his achievements was preserved. The time went by, the sales and dispersal of the Wrocław collections and the changes of their owners interrupted the tradition abruptly. Until the mid-eighteenth century Kundmann, Gomolcky and Stieff wrote a lot about Bendeler as the most eminent painter active in Wrocław, in so far as nineteenth and twentieth centuries he was mentioned only occasionally by the most scrupulous authors of artists’ lexicons.<sup>29</sup> The oblivion was even deepened by the loss of the majority of Bendeler’s paintings kept in Silesian museums during the World War II. Hence it would be the search in vain to look for the artist’s name in the contemporary publications on art in Wrocław, art in Silesia, or even in the first volume of the lexicon of the artists active in Silesia.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, Bendeler became an almost entirely forgotten artist. Let this article be the first, little step on the road to restore at least a part of his former fame.

*Translated by Anita Wincencjusz-Patyna*

ZAPOMENUTÁ HVĚZDA VRATISLAVSKÝCH MALÍŘSKÝCH SBÍREK  
ANEB NĚKOLIK SLOV O ŽIVOTĚ A DÍLE CHRISTIANA JOHANNA BENDELER  
(1688–1728) (ANDRZEJ KOZIEŁ) – RESUMÉ

Článek představuje život a dílo Christiana Johanna Bendelera, téměř zapomenutého malíře krajin. Bendeler se narodil v roce 1688 v Quedlinburgu jako syn Johanna Philippa Bendelera (1654–1709), dobře známého teoretika konstrukce varhan. Ačkoli Christian Johann byl umělec samouk, rychle vešel ve známost jako výtečný malíř krajinář. V roce 1713 přišel do Bierutowa ve Slezsku a následně se usídlil ve Vratislavi, kde setrval až do své smrti v roce 1728. Ve slezské metropoli Bendeler pracoval výlučně pro místní sběratele umění, jako byli např. Johann Stenzel, umělcův nejlepší přítel a mecenáš, princ Franz Adrian z Hatzfeldtu, hrabě Carl Johann Emmerich z Bergu a Herrendorfu, Johann Georg Pauli, Albrecht Saebisch nebo Johann Ernst Stieff. Do současnosti se bohužel dochovala pouze malá část Bendelerova díla: *Krajina se sarkofágem*, 1720 (Muzeum v Gliwicích); *Slunná horská krajina s lovcem*, 1718; *Zimní krajina osvětlená měsícem*, 1718; *Krajina s divadlem v přírodě*, 1720; *Krajina s venkovskou svatbou*, 1720 (všechny: Městská muzea v Quedlinburgu / Zámecké muzeum) a tři obrazy na uměleckém trhu (*Krajina s rolníkem odpočívajícím u jezera*, *Lodě na pobřeží v bouři* a obraz s horskou scenérií, 1718). Skromný počet dochovaných Bendelerových prací doplňují dvě kresby ve sbírkách Státního muzea ve Schwerinu: *Lesnatá horská krajina* a *Krajina s pohledem na skály a hrad*, 1714.

Bendeler maloval podle několika historizujících konvencí, charakteristických pro nizozemskou krajinomalbu první poloviny „Zlatého věku“. Byl též obeznámen s konvencemi pastorálních krajin italského typu 17. století. Podobnost mezi Bendelerovými malbami a díly „velkých mistrů“ krajinomalby byla pravděpodobně tržní strategií vůči jeho zákazníkům. Ve vratislavských malířských sbírkách dvacátých a třicátých let 18. století se nacházeli nejdůležitější mistři evropské krajinomalby a jejich díla tvořila vysoké procento obrazů ve sbírkách. Velká oblíbenost Bendelerových krajinomaleb ve Vratislavi mohla navíc povzbudit tamější sběratele v zájmu o současnou krajinomalbu, nejen o velké evropské mistry.

Vratislavské umělecké sbírky přispěly k Bendelerovu úspěchu, avšak zároveň způsobily, že později upadl v zapomnění. Malíř, který pracoval téměř výlučně pro soukromé sběratele, nebyl prakticky přítomen v ikonosféře města. Dokud Bendelerovi mecenáši a obdivovatelé jeho díla žili, obrazy v jejich sbírkách se těšily zájmu. Postupem času se rozprodáním vratislavských sbírek nebo změnou majitelů tradice přerušila a Bendelerovo zapomnění se pak dále prohloubilo zkázou většiny jeho maleb ze slezských sbírek v důsledku událostí druhé světové války. Tento článek je prvním krokem k alespoň částečnému obnovení někdejší slávy Johanna Bendelera.

- \* I would like to address my very special thanks to Anna Kwiecień, MA, Jolanta Wnuk, MA, Dagmara Wójcik, MA (Muzeum w Gliwicach), Hela Baudis, Ph.D. (Staatliches Museum Schwerin, Kupferstichkabinett), and Brigitte Meixner (Städtische Museen Quedlinburg) for their precious help with preparing the following article.
- 1 Daniel Gomolcky, *Des kurtzgefaßten Inbegriffs der vornehmsten Merckwürdigkeiten in der Kayser- und Königl. Stadt Breslau in Schlesien*, vol. 2, Breslau 1735, pp. 70–73.
  - 2 Johann Ernst Stieff, Herrn Johann Ernst Stieffs, M. D. in Breßlau, zuverlässige Nachrichten, von dem berühmten Landschaftmaler Christian Johann Bendeler, *Miscellaneen artistischen Inhalts* 19, 1784, pp. 13–26. No later biographical note about the artist enriched Stieff's account with some new facts from the artist's life. See Christian Ludwig von Hagedorn, *Lettre à un amateur de la peinture avec des éclaircissements historiques sur un cabinet et les auteurs des tableaux, qui le composent*, Dresden 1755, p. 344. – Friedrich A. Zimmermann, *Beiträge zur Beschreibung von Schlesien*, vol. 12, Brieg 1794, pp. 422–423. – Georg Kaspar Nagler, *Neues allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon oder Nachrichten von dem Leben und Werken der Maler, Bildhauer, Baumeister, Kupferstecher, Lithographen, Formschneider, Zeichner, Medailleure, Elfenbeinarbeiter etc.*, vol. 1, Leipzig 1835, p. 416. – Gottlieb Wilhelm Geyser, *Geschichte der Malerei in Leipzig von frühester Zeit bis zu den Jahre 1813*, Leipzig 1858, pp. 52–53. – Hans Luchs, *Bildende Künstler in Schlesien nach Namen und Monogrammen*. Erste Reihe, *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Geschichte und Althertum Schlesiens* 5, 1863, p. 43. – Alwin Schultz, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Schlesischen Maler (1500–1800)*, Breslau 1882, p. 22. – Thomas Y. Levin, Bendler, Christian Johann, in: Julius Meyer – Hermann Lücke – Hugo von Tschudi (eds.), *Allgemeines Künstler-Lexikon*, vol. 3, Leipzig 1885<sup>2</sup>, pp. 513–514. – Albrecht Kurzwelly, Bendeler (Bendler), Christian Johann, in: Ulrich Thieme – Felix Becker (eds.), *Allgemeines Lexikon der bildenden Künstler von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, vol. 3, Leipzig 1909, p. 299. – Emmanuel Bénézit, *Dictionnaire Critique et Documentaire des Peintres, Sculpteurs, Dessinateurs & Graveurs de tous les Temps et de tous les Pays*, vol. 1, Paris 1911, p. 498. – Friedrich Heinevetter, Johann Christian Bendeler, ein vergessener Maler, *Gleiwitzer Jahrbuch* 1928, pp. 225–229. – M. S., Bendeler, Christian Johann, in: *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Die bildenden Künstler aller Zeiten und Völker*, vol. 8, München – Leipzig 1994, p. 618. – Martin Stolzenau, Malergröße Christian Bendeler stammt aus Quedlinburg, *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, 5<sup>th</sup> Mai 2009.
  - 3 On Johann Philipp Bendeler, see Arrey von Dommer, Bendeler, Johann Philipp, in: *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie*, vol. 2, München 1875, pp. 320f. – Christhard Mahrenholz, *Die Berechnung der Orgelpfeifenmessungen. Vom Mittelalter bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Kassel 1938, pp. 38f. – Friedrich Wilhelm Bautz, Bendeler, Johann Philipp, in: *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon*, vol. 1, Hamm 1990, col. 480.
  - 4 This information is confirmed by the record in the register book of St. Adalbert church in Wrocław under the date 20<sup>th</sup> November 1728: „Sepultus è D. Christianus Bendler, in Cemeterius” – Archiwum Archidiecezjalne we Wrocławiu, sig. 449 c<sup>1</sup>.
  - 5 „VI. Tabula Regionum, a Bendlero” – Johann Christian Kundmann, *Promptuarium rerum naturalium et artificialium Vratislaviense*, Vratislaviae 1726, p. 50. Fifteen years later there were only four Bendeler's landscapes in Hatzfeld's collection. See Johann Christian Kundmann, *Academiae et Scholae Germaniae, praecipue Ducatus Silesiae, cum Bibliothecis, in Nummis. Oder: Die Hohen und Niedern Schulen Teutschlandes [...]*, Breßlau 1741, p. 369.
  - 6 „Bey Sr. Hoch=Gräffl. Gnad. Tit. pleniss. Herrn Grafen Carl Johann Emmerich von Berg und Herrendorf, der ein extraordinairer Kenner und Liebhaber von Curiositäten ist, sind viele rare Stücke, besonders einige von Bendlern, die ihre admiration verdienen.” – Gomolcky (note 1), pp. 65–66. – See also Kundmann, *Promptuarium* (note 5), pp. 53–54.
  - 7 See Kundmann, *Promptuarium* (note 5), pp. 82, 84. – Kundmann, *Academiae* (note 5), pp. 424, 425.
  - 8 See *Verzeichniss derer Schildereyen und Kunstsachen aus welchen das Cabinet des weiland Tit. plen. Herrn Albrecht von Saebisch gewesenenen Rathes=Praesidis der Königl. Preuß. Haupt und Residenz=Stadt Breslau effective bestehet*, Breslau 20. November 1767, typescript, Gabinet Dokumentów, Muzeum Narodowe we Wrocławiu, Cat. sig. 330a, nos. 2 and 3: „Zwei zusammen gehörige Landschaften, Bendler.”
  - 9 The paintings were given to the museum in Gliwice by Engelmann, the prosecutor from Wrocław in 1906. See Heinevetter (note 2), p. 228.
  - 10 *Ibidem*, p. 229.
  - 11 „Waldlandschaft. Rechts im Vordegrun eine hohe Baumgruppe, vor der zwei von Hunden begleitete Männer im Gespräche stehen. Links, jenseits eines dem Mittelgrunde sich fortsetzende Waldpartie, aus der ein Mann und ein Knabe heraustraten. Auf einer Wiese ein Hirt mit seiner Heerde. In der Ferne Berge. Vorstehendes Bild, sowie ein im Vorrathe der Galerie bewahrtes Gegenstück sind die inzigten, bisher nachweisbar erhaltenen Zeugen der fruchtbaren Thätigkeit des Künstlers.” – *Schlesisches Museum der bildenden Künste zu Breslau. Illustrierte Katalog*, Breslau 1886, pp. 6–7, no. 401. Both the pictures came to the museum from Picture Gallery of the so-called State House (Stände-Haus). See Gustav Parthey, *Deutscher Bildersaal. Verzeichniss der in Deutschland vorhandenen Oelbilder verstorbener Maler aller Schulen in alphabetischer*

- Folge zusammengestellt*, vol. 1, Berlin 1863, p. 96. Most probably these are the same Bendeler's pictures as the ones from Albrecht of Saebisch's collection.
- 12 Inv. No. Sz/3848/M Gl.; size: 52 x 62,5 cm. The picture was conserved before 1945 in Vienna by F. Antoine. During the conservation the signature "C. Bendeler fec. 1720" was erased.
  - 13 Described as: Felsenlandschaft mit Wasserfall, 1718, 28 x 38 cm, Inv. No. V/273/K1. – Flußlandschaft an Winterabend, 1718, 38 x 29 cm, Inv. No. V/269/K1. – Landschaft mit fröhlicher Gessellschaft, 1720, 43 x 31 cm, Inv. No. V/272/K1. – Landschaft mit Theatervorstellung, 1720, 43 x 31 cm, Inv. No. V/271/K1. See Hans F. Schweers, *Gemälde in deutschen Museen. Katalog der ausgestellten und depotgelagerten Werke. Vierte aktualisierte und erweiterte Ausgabe*, part 1, A–G, München 2005, p. 80.
  - 14 The picture painted with oil on canvas, the size of 44 x 62 cm appeared on sale in an unknown auction house on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2000.
  - 15 The picture painted on a copper plate, signed, the size of 49 x 59 cm appeared on the auction at Sotheby's in London on 6<sup>th</sup> December 1989 (*Old Master Paintings II*, Cat. no. 192), and later at the auction at Liber & Castor's in Paris on 18<sup>th</sup> December 1992 (*Tableau modernes – dessins et beaux tableaux anciens*, Cat. no. 63). In 2006 the painting belonged to Galerie Neuse in Bremen. It is interesting, that the landscape was painted on the verso of the copperplate with thesis of Professor Leopold Liebsstein from the Wrocław University. This engraving had been designed by Godefried Beyer and engraved by Johann Oertl in Wrocław in 1704. I am grateful for this information to Piotr Oszczanowski, Ph.D.
  - 16 The picture painted with oil on canvas, the size of 71,9 x 86,9 cm appeared on the auction at Leo Spik's in Berlin on 15<sup>th</sup> October 1992 (Cat. No. 562) and was sold for 2 400 \$. Present location of the work in unknown.
  - 17 Inv. no. 1566 Hz, coloured pencil drawing on paper, size: 16,0 x 21,4 cm and Inv. no. 1565 Hz, coloured pencil drawing on paper, size: 13,5 x 17,4 cm, signed at the bottom: "Christian Bendeler inv. 1714". See Ingrid Möller (ed.), *Deutsche Zeichnungen: 16.–18. Jahrhundert, eigene Bestände, Staatliches Museum Schwerin*, Schwerin 1980, p. 72.
  - 18 Hagedorn (note 2), p. 344. – Nagler (note 2), p. 416. – Geysler (note 2), p. 53. – Levin (note 2), pp. 513–514. – Kurzwelly (note 2), p. 299. – Bénézit (note 2), p. 498. – M. S. (note 2), p. 618.
  - 19 On Christoph Ludwig Agricola's works, see Rüdiger Klessmann, Christoph Ludwig Agricola – ein vergessener Landschaftsmaler des Barock, in: Juliusz Antoni Chrościcki (ed.), *Arx Felicitas. Księga ku czci Profesora Andrzeja Rottermunda w sześćdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin od przyjaciół, kolegów i współpracowników*, Warszawa 2001, pp. 207–215, and Rüdiger Klessmann, Der Landschaftsmaler Christoph Ludwig Agricola. Zur Charakteristik und Chronologie seiner Werke, *Niederdeutsche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 43/44, 2004/2005, pp. 207–224 (also earlier reference literature there).
  - 20 Gomolcky (note 1), pp. 72–73.
  - 21 See Hagedorn (note 2), p. 344. – Stieff (note 2), p. 66. – Geysler (note 2), p. 53. – Kurzwelly (note 2), p. 299; among the others.
  - 22 Kundmann, *Promptuarium* (note 5), p. 50. – Kundmann, *Academiae* (note 5), pp. 368–369.
  - 23 Kundmann, *Academiae* (note 5), pp. 407–408. In 1726 Kundmann acknowledged the landscapes as the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. See Kundmann, *Promptuarium* (note 5), p. 53.
  - 24 On Prague period of the artist's activity, see Arkadiusz Muła, Johann Frans de Backer i jego związki z Czechami. Kilka uwag na temat zyciorysu i oeuvre flamandzkiego malarza, in: Mateusz Kapustka – Andrzej Koziół – Piotr Oszczanowski (eds.), *Śląsk i Czechy. Wspólne drogi sztuki. Materiały konferencji dedykowane Profesorowi Janowi Wrabecowi*, Wrocław 2007, pp. 327–340.
  - 25 Kundmann, *Promptuarium* (note 5), pp. 83–84. – Kundmann, *Academiae* (note 5), p. 425. Johann Pauli's collection is also mentioned by Caspar Friedrich Neickelio, *Museographia oder Anleitung Zum rechten Begriff und nützlicher Anlegung der Museorum oder Raritäten = Kammern*, Leipzig – Breslau 1727, p. 29, and Gomolcky (note 1), p. 63.
  - 26 Johann Christian Kundmann, *Sammlung von Natur= und Künstlichen Sachen, auch Münzen [...]*, Breßlau 1753, p. 514, nos. 3–4.
  - 27 See Bernhard von Prittitz, Zur Geschichte der Gemälde-Galerie in Ständehause (Eigenthum der Stadt Breslau), *Schlesiens Vorzeit in Bild und Schrift* 3, 1881, pp. 232–239. – Ewa Houszka, Prehistoria wrocławskich muzeów / Vorgeschichte der Breslauer Museen, in: Piotr Łukaszewicz (ed.), *Muzea sztuki w dawnym Wrocławiu / Kunstsammlungen im alten Breslau*, Wrocław 1998, pp. 20–22.
  - 28 The exact list of paintings from Saebisch's collection – *Verzeichniss derer Schildeereyen [...]*, Part I, *Landschaften oder Gegenden*. In the collection there were also some pictures by older generation masters, e.g. Cornelis van Poelenburgh (4 pictures), Nicolas Berchem (8 pictures) or Pieter Mulier II called Il Cavalier Tempesta (1 picture), and as well "eine einzelne Gegend mit Glase überzogen", painted by Albrecht of Saebisch himself (Cat. no. 332).
  - 29 As the exception comes here the article by Friedrich Heinevetter, published in 1928. See Heinevetter (note 2), pp. 225–229.
  - 30 Rainer Sachs, *Lexikon der bildenden Künstler und Kunsthandwerker Schlesiens bis 1945*, vol. 1, A–B, Breslau 2001.



