

La historia de la fotografía estereoscópica en Lituania de 1860 a 1915

The history of stereoscopic photography in Lithuania from 1860 to 1915

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RESUMEN

El estudio sobre la fotografía estereoscópica en Lituania se llevó a cabo utilizando dos métodos complementarios entre sí. Se investigaron los hechos históricos a partir de las fuentes publicadas y de archivo, mientras que la información sobre la producción de los editores se substanció en las imágenes estereoscópicas existentes accesibles para el autor. Esta investigación histórica fue compilada por el autor en un álbum (Junevičius, 2019) que presenta alrededor de 200 fotografías de colecciones de instituciones en Lituania, Polonia, Francia y Rusia junto con colecciones privadas en Lituania. La estimación del autor es que el libro incluye el 60 por ciento de las imágenes estereoscópicas producidas en Lituania antes de 1915. Los datos sobre las actividades de los editores rusos y alemanes de imágenes estereoscópicas en Lituania pueden contribuir a una investigación más amplia sobre la historia de la fotografía estereoscópica y abarcar varios países.

Palabras clave: Fotografía estereoscópica, Lituania, siglo XIX, Korzon, Neue Photographische Gesellschaft, Conrad Muller, Yermakov, Fleury.

ABSTRACT

The study into stereoscopic photography in Lithuania was conducted using two mutually complementary methods. Historical facts were researched from the published and archival sources, while information on production from the publishers was substantiated by extant stereoscopic images accessible to the author. This historical research was compiled by the author in an album (Junevičius, 2019) featuring around 200 photographs from collections held by institutions in Lithuania, Poland, France and Russia alongside private collections in Lithuania. The author's estimation is that the book includes 60 per cent of stereoscopic images produced in Lithuania prior to 1915. The data on the activities by the Russian and German publishers of stereoscopic images in Lithuania may contribute to broader research into the history of stereoscopic photography and encompass several countries.

Keywords: Stereoscopic photography, Lithuania, 19th century, Korzon, Neue Photographische Gesellschaft, Conrad Muller, Yermakov, Fleury.

After the last Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, Lithuania became part of Tsarist Russia. At the advent of photography, Lithuania was administered from St Petersburg, though a significant part of society did not reconcile itself to the loss of statehood and was

more orientated to Europe. An important factor for Lithuania's economic situation and social development was efficient communication with Western Europe. Land routes connecting Tilsit and Riga, Warsaw and St Petersburg ran through Lithuania. Distances became even shorter when the St Petersburg-Warsaw railway line with a branch connecting Vilnius to Königsberg was built through Kaunas in 1861. It did not take long for inventions and innovations to reach Vilnius due to its convenient geographic location. For example, a daguerreotype camera was used there for the first time in 1839 by a Swiss tutor to children of a wealthy family, who was returning from Paris after a summer break.

There is no data on the use of stereoscopic daguerreotypes in Lithuania, but the presence of a stereoscopic daguerreotype portrait of Vilnius-dweller Bartłomiej Beniowski (ca. 1800-1867) is in the collection of the National Museum of Lithuania (Matulytė, 2000: 24, 75), confirming that stereoscopy was known and enjoyed by inhabitants of the city, despite the fact this particularly portrait was probably taken in London.

The first stereoscopic photographs in Lithuania were made by the Vilnius photographer Abdon Korzon (1824-after 1874).¹ He became interested in photography at the age of 33, and travelled to Paris to improve his photographic skills in 1858.

Though Korzon was a portrait photographer in high demand, he is credited in the history of Lithuanian photography as the author of the first views of Vilnius. It is highly likely that he brought the idea of outdoor photography and stereoscopic photography from France. It was on 23 August 1860, that a contributor to the local newspaper *Kurier Wileński*, which regularly covered photographic studios in Vilnius, first mentioned the fact that Korzon made stereoscopic photographs. A camera and lenses for making stereoscopic photographs were sent to him from Paris and he also supplied the residents of Vilnius with stereoscopes and stereoscopic photographs of various cities that he ordered from abroad (Przybylski, 1860: 780) (FIGS. 1 and 2).

The photographer became involved in the uprising of 1863, and in late April he was arrested, sentenced and deported to Siberia. He did not practice photography after 1863. Although he was later amnestied, he never returned to Lithuania, and the place and date of his death remain unknown.

After Korzon's deportation, his studio was leased by other photographers (Józef Brzozowski and Okolov), who held an exhibition of stereoscopic images in the summer of 1865. They may have shown stereoscopic photographs made by Korzon as well (Matulytė, 2002: 182).

Referring to the reviews in the newspaper, we can assert that Korzon may have made approximately twenty stereoscopic images of Vilnius and its close environs. For many years, it was thought they had been completely lost, but six photographs are known today. Four of them were identified in the holdings of the Polish Library in Paris, one is held in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków, and yet another of Korzon's stereoscopic photographs was purchased by a Lithuanian collector in France in 2017.

After Korzon, nobody took stereoscopic photographs in Vilnius up until the end of the 19th century, but there was another photographer in rural Lithuania who worked with a stereoscopic camera during the wet collodion period. This unidentified photographer sent photographs he had taken on the estate at Plateliai in West Lithuania, to the first All-Russia Ethnographic Exhibition held in Moscow in 1867. Photographers from different parts of Russia were asked to send pic-

1 A book on Korzon: *Abdon Korzon: the First Photographer to Capture Vilnius* was recently published in Lithuanian with an English summary (Junevičius, 2018).

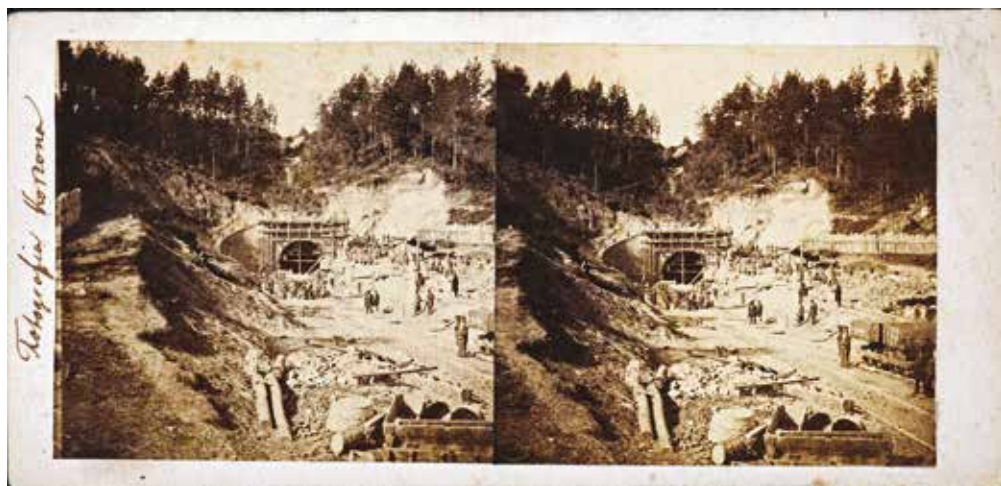


FIG. 1. Abdon Korzon. Paneriai Railway Tunnel, near Vilnius. August 1860. Probably the earliest stereoscopic photograph taken in Lithuania, Courtesy of the Polish Library in Paris.



FIG. 2. Abdon Korzon. Didžioji Street, Vilnius. A view of the main street near Korzon's studio. Courtesy of the Polish Library in Paris.

tures of people of the Empire and the exhibition became recognised as an important event in the history of photography. Photographs from the 1867 exhibition are held in the Photographic Collection of the Russian Museum of Ethnography in St Petersburg. In searching this collection it was revealed that four stereoscopic photographs of groups of peasants were among the images sent in from Plateliai in Lithuania, the estate owned by the French nobleman Alexandre de Choiseul-Gouffier. Some argue that the owner of the manor himself practised photography and he may have taken these photographs (FIG. 3).

With the arrival of the gelatine-plate process, stereoscopic photography regained its popularity. Travelling stereoscopic theatres known as photoplasticons appeared in Vilnius, and stereoscopic photographs as well as the equipment for viewing them were in demand in the last decade



FIG. 3. Anonymous photographer. Five peasant women with spinning wheels. Plateliai manor, 1866. Courtesy of the Russian Museum of Ethnography, REM 8764-10752.

of the 19th century. For instance, in 1891, E. von Meyer's panoramic theatre of various European locations, containing more than a hundred photographs from France, Switzerland and Asia came to Vilnius. Later, Vilnius also saw the Mystery Plays of the Passion of Christ held in Oberammergau, in Bavaria, starting with the 17th century (Anonymous, 1891: 8). In January 1894, an international travelling panorama containing fifty stereoscopic photographs of the Chicago World Exhibition was on view Vilnius. The public of Vilnius could also see the photographs of Russian sailors taken in Toulon and elsewhere in Italy, France, Switzerland, Egypt and Argentina (Anonymous, 1894: 8).

Stereoscopic photographs showing views of Vilnius reappeared at the turn of the 20th century. At that time Vilnius, the administrative centre of «The Northwestern Krai», was the fifth largest city of Russia with a railway station, a rich variety of shops on central streets, and factory buildings with smouldering chimneys in the city's suburbs. An important factor in the growth of the city's economy was the railway. From 1860 to 1897, the population increased from 60,000 to 155,000.

The first published views of Vilnius came from a publisher whose products bear the imprint of A & M B. The letters A and M were presumably the owners' initials, of a company that operated in Berlin. The photographs capture the city's transformation between 1900 and 1901, so it can be deduced that the photographer must have visited Vilnius circa 1900. He also travelled to other parts of Lithuania: in addition to ten photographs of Vilnius, six stereo images of Kaunas, two of Žagarė and two of Radviliškis are known to have been published by A & M B. The numbering shows that several more photographs of each of these locations may have existed.

Next to nothing is known about A & M B. The publisher issued more than 800 different views, mainly of Russian cities and towns such as St Petersburg, Moscow, Samara, Kaluga, Pskov and others. Aside from views of Lithuania, they produced images of other places in the Baltic re-



FIG. 4. Kaunas. On the Nemunas (The Nemunas embankment at the Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary) Publisher A&M B., ~1900, no 2312/528. Courtesy of Dainius Junevičius

gion of the Russian empire (Riga, Daugavpils, Dobeles, Kuldīga, Narva) and Poland (Warsaw, Łódź). The captions in Russian and German indicate that the production was meant for the Russian and German markets (FIG. 4).

The companies that operated later –*Conrad A. Müller & Co.* from Nuremberg, *Neue Photographische Gesellschaft (NPG)* from Berlin and several others– published photographs taken exclusively in Vilnius.

The famous Berlin publisher *Neue Photographische Gesellschaft (NPG)*, one of the largest publishers of photographic production in the 20th century (operating between 1894 and 1918), supplied photographic postcards and stereoscopic photographs for mass circulation, and was less interested in Eastern Europe versus Western Europe and the rest of the world. It published only a few images of Eastern European cities (Warsaw, Łódź, Minsk, Moscow etc). In 1907, NPG produced six stereo photographs of Vilnius (*Verzeichnis*, 1907: 90). The photographer is unknown. The titles of the images are given in three languages (Polish, Russian and German).

A large number of stereo-photographs of various locations in Russia and Poland bear the imprint of the Nuremberg company *Conrad A. Müller & Co.* Founded in 1904, and specialising in the wholesale trade and production of photographic equipment, the company had offices in Warsaw and Moscow, and was a sole representative of the producers of Heinrich Ernemann cameras and Steinheil anastigmatic lenses *Orthostigmat* and *Unofocal* in Russia. It must have used stereoscopic photographs as a means of advertising. Judging by the serial number of the extant known photographs, *Conrad A. Müller & Co.* published around 3000 views. It started its publishing activity with views of Moscow, St Petersburg, Warsaw, Kiev, and other towns of Western Russia. Later, photographers of *Conrad A. Müller & Co.* were dispatched further to the East and reached the Caucasus, Siberia, Manchuria and other areas.

There were more than ten stereoscopic images of Vilnius published by *Conrad A. Müller & Co.* around 1907, seven of which are known today. The captions are in three languages –Russian, Polish and German.

Around 1910, the Moscow-based photographer A. Yermakov visited Vilnius. He produced twenty or more good-quality stereoscopic photographs. Twenty of his stereoscopic images of Vilnius and neighbouring places were press printed by the work cooperative *Nauchno-obrazovatel'nye Novosti* (*News of Science and Education*) (in small print-runs), but their quality is inferior to that of the original photographs.

The data provided in this report regarding the quantity of published stereoscopic photographs is based on the numbering by the publishers and examples researched on the internet, mostly provided by online auctions. The total number of products by all of these publishers leaves us with nearly 100 images published in Lithuania over the period in question. Over several decades, around 60 photographs were successfully discovered and identified in different collections, and this accounts for 60 per cent of all production. The print-runs are not known, but they were not likely to be large, as several extant copies of the same view are only rare instances.

As we can see, a large proportion of Vilnius photographs were taken by photographers commissioned by various non-local publishing houses between 1900 and 1910. Most likely hailing from Russia, Poland or Germany, these photographers would have been unfamiliar with the city and, being hard-pressed to finish their assignment, photographed only the major «representational» objects, which were of interest to tourists of the city. They had no concern for daily life, and people in their photographs appear as arbitrary and incidental objects to make the shots more vivid.

The local photographer Stanisław Filibert Fleury (1858-1915) saw the life of Vilnius different to that of the visiting photographers. While he too photographed the most prominent architectural and historical monuments of Vilnius and Catholic churches, he captured other objects that would have failed to attract the attention of some publishers: he went to market places and cemeteries, photographed street vendors, children swimming naked in the Neris and blocks of ice being prepared for summer. There are hardly any Russian monuments or temples in his photographs. Fleury took many photographs during his trips to the environs of Vilnius – he found interesting vantage points, photographed landscapes, roads and bridges that today have changed beyond recognition, as well as winter landscapes. Though he was not pressured for time, he found it important to capture the places in which change was imminent. Some of the views in his photographs disappeared quite rapidly – the Basokų Market was closed, the Horse Market was moved out of Lukiškių Square, the exhibition in the Bernardine Gardens ended, and the squares were reconstructed. It is unclear whether the photographer was in a hurry to capture what was about to disappear, or if photographing these scenes expressed his resistance to change. It may be just a coincidence that he photographed the majority of stereoscopic views on the eve of these changes between 1900 and 1903 (FIGS. 5 and 6).

Fleury showed 50 stereoscopic photographs at the First International Photographic Exhibition of the St Petersburg Photographic Society in 1903 (*Ukazatel'*, 1903: 31). To date, 119 stereoscopic photographs by Fleury are known. It is unique that 49 negatives of Fleury's stereoscopic photographs have survived (Gudaitė, 2016: 324).

Although Fleury bore a French surname, he was born, in 1858, on the estate at Pupojai near Vilnius and was the third generation of the Fleury family living in Vilnius. His grandfather, the son of a French officer serving in the Polish-Lithuanian army, came to Vilnius from Warsaw at the turn of 19th century.²

2 The life and creative heritage of Fleury was the subject of a comprehensive catalogue published by the National Museum of Lithuania (Gudaitė, 2016).



FIG. 5. S. F. Fleury. Vilnius. The west side of Rotušės Square. 1900–1903. Courtesy of the Lithuanian Theatre, Music and Cinema Museum.



FIG. 6. S. F. Fleury. Vilnius Bathing in the Neris River at the Green Bridge. Courtesy of the Wróblewski Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences.

Fleury was home schooled, and between 1869 and 1873 attended the gymnasium in Vilnius, but did not finish his studies due to strained financial circumstances. The artistic talent he inherited from his father was later developed at the Vilnius Drawing School led by Ivan Trutnev. Encouraged by Trutnev, like his peers, Fleury submitted his paintings and sculptures to exhibitions and competitions organised by the St Petersburg Academy of Art. He received various awards and commendations, and was awarded a silver medal from the academy for two of his small-scale sculptures.

Yet, Fleury settled on photography as his principal source of income. Having learned the basics from a master of portrait photography in Vilnius, artist Aleksander Strauss, he embarked

on an independent photographic practice in 1884, together with his friend and contemporary Ryszard Baczański, becoming an associate of the photographer Faustyn Łopatynski. Upon the latter's death, in November 1886, the studio passed on to Fleury and Baczański. In 1892, Fleury established his own studio on Didžioji Street. Around that time, he began to take outdoor photographs of Vilnius' architecture, historical monuments, street scenes, markets, suburban characters and environs, observing and photographing daily life.

Fleury was a member of the Russian Photographic Society and actively participated in exhibitions. In 1898, his photographs were awarded the grand silver medal in a competition run by the St Petersburg Photographic Society. Though he pursued photography for financial reasons, he never lost interest in the fine arts. In his spare time he made paintings and watercolours, was an active member of the Vilnius artistic scene, and visited picture galleries and exhibitions during periods of travel. A person of wide interests, he was fascinated by the country's past and was a collector. Fleury died in 1915 and was buried in the family grave in Vilnius' Bernardine Cemetery.

In the early 20th century, amateur photographers appeared in Lithuania, but very few of their photographs survive today.

The history of stereoscopic photography in Lithuania, as outlined here, has been published in 2019 by Arprint graphic design studio in the book *Stereoscopic Lithuania. 1860–1918. An album of stereoscopic images*. The texts are in Lithuanian and English, and the book includes all stereoscopic photographs of Lithuania known to the author from that period –amounting to almost 200 views. The photographs published in the book are held in public institutions in Lithuania, Poland, Russia and France, as well as in private collections in Lithuania. Stereoscopic images are presented as anaglyphs in the book.

By way of summing up, I would like to share my experience in connection with this research, the pursuit of photographs and the release of the publication, as it may prove of value to researchers and enthusiasts in other countries. I have been interested in stereoscopic photography for over two decades. By 2017, I had already amassed a collection of around 100 photographic images of Lithuania from the period. At that time, we already knew about the photographs by Korzon and Fleury, and I had just discovered stereoscopic photographs at the Russian Museum of Ethnography. This last discovery became the catalyst to publish the book. With partial financing from the Lithuanian Council for Culture, I tasked myself with the quest to find and publish as many unknown photographs as possible so that nothing was left out of the new publication.

The main problem I encountered is that stereoscopic photography is an almost forgotten art form, with many people unaware that the photographs they possess are indeed stereoscopic and need to be viewed with special equipment.

In April 2017, I introduced my project to the conference of Lithuanian museums, dedicated to the photography collections held by the museums (Junevičius, 2017). This ensured that curators of photography collections were notified about the project. Regrettably, this did not reap huge rewards, and only a few photographs previously unknown to me resurfaced. This did however become proof of the fact that in Lithuania neither museums nor libraries collected stereoscopic photographs. Many of the aforementioned photographs by Fleury reached the public institutions as part of other private collections. Stereoscopic photographs of Lithuania are a rarity on the market. I regularly attended collector meetings in different Lithuanian towns and I kept talking about my project, but this yielded no new photographs. I was positive I had included all extant photographs but just as the book was ready to go to press, fortuitously and almost simultaneously, within a couple of weeks, three other collectors appeared in possession of sev-

eral dozens of photographs. This included 30 previously unknown images by Fleury. The book had to be recompiled and we had to postpone the printing by half a year. However, I can now claim beyond doubt that it includes the majority of extant photographs –by my estimation, 60 per cent of those made in Lithuania prior to 1915 and around 95 per cent of those extant round the world.

The book was already printed when I learned from a private collector about his purchase of another photograph, not included in the book, from the A&M B printers. The publication of the book is surely going to rekindle an interest in stereoscopic photography in Lithuania. I hope to see new photographs resurfacing, especially abroad. I can therefore see huge value and potential in publishing another book dedicated to Lithuanian stereoscopic photography from 1915 to today.

The book presents the images using the anaglyphic (3D) method. I find it the most adequate method to present stereoscopic photographs in printed books, as firstly, it allows the enlargement and framing of the image and, secondly, glasses are inexpensive and convenient to include with the book. The only shortcoming of this method that I am aware of is that it is of no use to those who are colour-blind.

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