

I.

The magic world of antique visiting card cases
MAGICZNY ŚWIAT ZABYTKOWEGO WIZYTOWNIKA

The collection of Beata and Wladimir (Włodzimierz) Herman
KOLEKCJA BEATY I WŁODZIMIERZA HERMANÓW

Report on the exhibition of antique visiting card cases
REPORTAŻ Z WYSTAWY ZABYTKOWYCH WIZYTOWNIKÓW

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Museum of the University of Wrocław, Poland.

September 2021- February 2022

...



“Collectors are happy travelers who go straight to heaven...”

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

One can have doubts about the destination but certainly have fun on the way.

Wladimir (Włodzimierz) Herman

The City of Wrocław



Population over 800.000. A city in dynamic development. Since 1950s. a large science & culture center; now became a tourist attraction; 30 high education institutions, about 120.000 students, a lot off theaters, opera, music hall, philharmonic...

The University



Built in XVIII century of Leopold I of Austria in baroque style. About 26.000 students.

The Museum

The beautiful historic interiors of the University can be viewed by visiting the created in 1992 Museum of the University of Wrocław. The biggest attraction is the Aula Leopoldina located on the first floor - considered the most beautiful secular baroque interior in Poland.



Aula Leopoldina



The baroque decorated ceiling in entree to the Museum



Entrée to the Museum from the street.



Entrée to the exhibition rooms.

III.

Opening ceremony 30.09.2021



His Magnificence Rector of the University of Wrocław Prof. dr. Przemysław Wiszewski opens the exhibition. Prof. dr. M. Sachanbiński, who has conveyed the idea of the exhibition to the Museum; Museum director Prof. dr. Jan Harasimowicz and Wladimir Herman



Prof. Dr. Jan Harasimowicz

3. Opening ceremony



Beata and Wladimir Herman



Ms. Urszula Rozpara, MA, exhibitions curator

3. Opening ceremony

IV.

Visitors



4. The Visitors





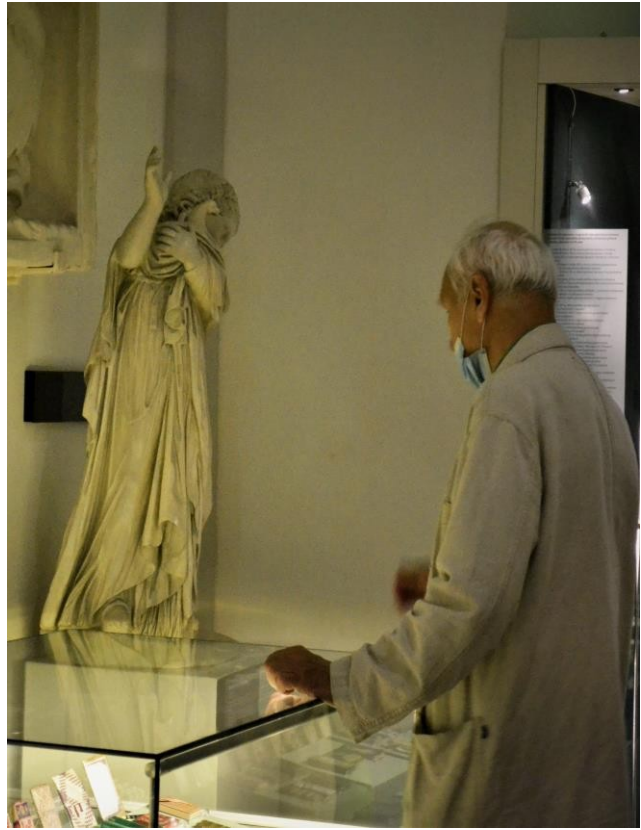
Exposition in the pandemic time



Beata



Wladimir



V.

Visiting card cases

The first visiting card cases were made of silver and wood in Great Britain around 1810–1820. The production developed on a larger scale only after the 1820s, mainly in Birmingham... Pocket visiting card cases were manufactured in various sizes, most of them were 7- to 12-cm high, 5- to 8-cm wide and 0.5- to 1-cm thick, and it is this flatness (apart from their openings systems variety) that distinguishes them from cigarette cases.

Most important producer of antique visiting card cases was Great Britain, followed by China, Japan, and some other countries in Asia and USA.

Germany, France and rest of Europe produced also card cases, but not in a large scale.

Russia produced a very small amount of this kind of cases.

The variety and multiplicity of materials, sceneries, technics and motifs on visiting card cases are surprisingly large and prove the demand for such items, most often purchased as souvenirs and gifts in the times of growing tourism, from ca. 1820.

The market's and collectors interest in antique visiting card cases has grown year-over-year.



Great Britain

Great Britain was the main producer of antique card cases (1820-1940). The variety of materials, styles, decorations is the highest in the world. The most famous masters of silver work are from Birmingham; some of them are immortals: Nathaniel Mills (and his sons). His most popular and rare cases are silver castle-top with topographic motifs on front.



Tortoiseshell gem painting



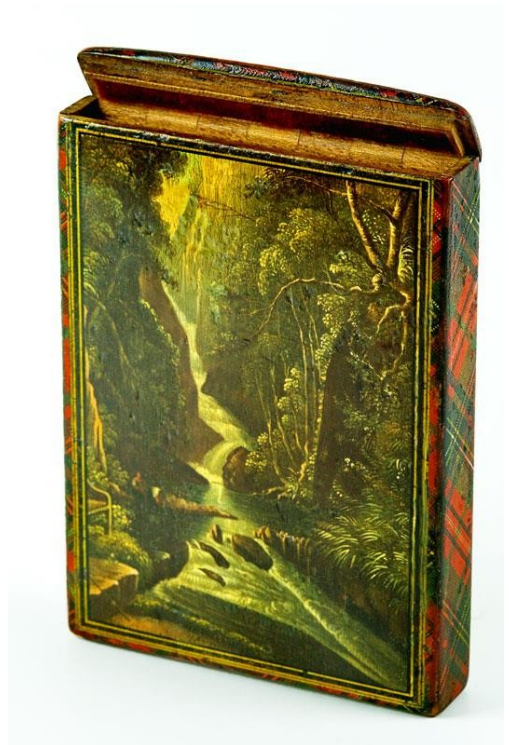
Papier Mache, hand painted, lacquered



Silver, castle-top by N. Mills



Scottish Tartan and Mauchline cases. The picture case with miniature hand painted view Birks of Abersfeldy is the oldest visiting card case on the Exposition (1820-25)





Tortoiseshell decorated with Mother of Pearl and other cases.



Tortoiseshell, gem painted (Hinterglassmalerei)



Silver

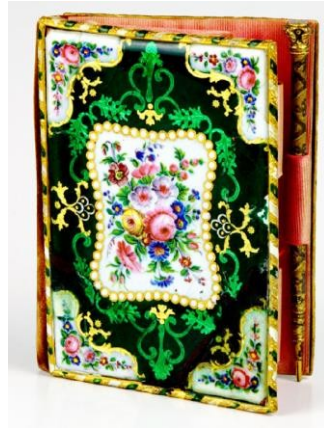
VII.

Germany, France and other European countries

In Europe, beside England and Russia, were card cases produced mainly in two countries, Germany and France. Germany produced some ivory carved visiting card cases in Erbach. They made also embroidery card cases. France was the center of the beautiful card cases with porcelain paintings, mostly in form of book shaped case, which continued the reach tradition in production of many sorts of carnets de bal. A number of Ivory cases, mostly book shaped, were produced in Dieppe. Austria, Italy, Sweden, Netherland produced also some card cases. Malta made a few silver filigree case, mainly with the Maltese cross.



German Ivory carving



French porcelaine painting



Swedish enamel with gold



Austrian agate with silver



German and French Ivory



French porcelain, ivory, straw and papier mache



French and German silk and embroidery Art Deco



French and other European Mother of Pearl



French silver and glass painting



French and German leather and embroidery cases



European Art Deco

VIII.

Russia

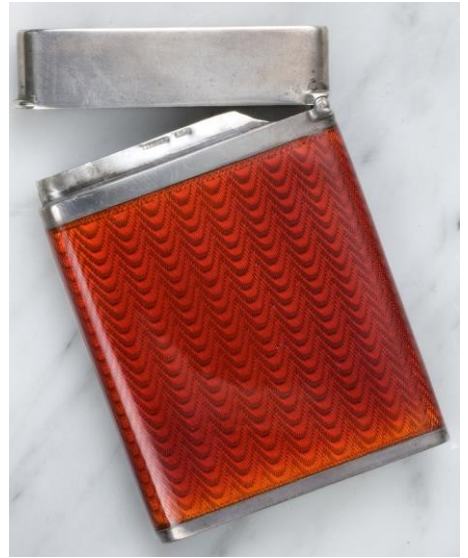
Russia has a rich tradition of artisanal handicraft, but visiting card cases were rarely produced there, as it was a greater demand for cigarette cases and boxes. Beautiful, but very rare lacquer visiting card cases were made in Lukutin workshop. Cloisonné and silver visiting card cases are extremely rare. More popular are some Karelian cases made of birch bark. Faberge produced extremely small amount of card cases. Some of them are only “attribute to Faberge”, even they have all his hallmarks.



Hand painted, Lacquer



Cloisonné



Guilloché (attribute to Faberge)



Hand painted lacquer



IX.

USA and Middle East

USA produced quite a lot visiting card cases, mainly in silver and multi metal. The most looked for cases are those crafted by Native Americans from North USA and Canada. They are made of such unusual materials as tree bark, dried flowers, shells, straw, or horsehair. It is just because of their subtle delicacy, fragility, and rarity they are sought after by many collectors of native handikraft.

In Middle East, mostly in Jerusalem, they made in the 1920s some tourist souvenirs and between them also some visiting card cases.



American Art Nouveau



Native Americans



American multi metal



Native Americans



American silver (Number 25, 31)



Silver

Middle East



Olive wood



X.

Anglo-Indian (Hindu), Burma and Siam

India, Kashmir, Bengal, Burma (today Myanmar) and Siam (Thailand) produced silver card cases (Asian silver), mostly with fauna, flora and religious -mythological motifs. The quality of silver and technic was not so high, maybe with exception of Lucknow cases (a city in India). Some visiting card cases from India are decorated with impressive mosaics of various stones, bones, and mother-of-pearl. We call them 'Anglo-Indian card cases'.



Lucknow silver



Mosaic with Ivory decoration



Sandale wood



Asian silver



Anglo-Indian Mosaic



Mosaic



Papier-mache



Asian carved wood

XI.

China

With the great and rich artistic handicraft tradition began China producing visiting card case for export in the 1840s. The most tasteful, impressive visiting card cases, made of ivory, tortoiseshell, wood, etc. Among the most interesting are the famous ivory Cantonese cases. The Chinese visiting card case made of decoratively painted porcelain and presented at the exhibition is extraordinary. Card cases of the type are unknown. The card case made of mammoth incisors framed with silver panels is also extremely rare. China produced also quite a lot silver card cases with motives similar to cases of ivory. The most original are those with dragon motifs.



Ivory



Mammoth incisors



Enamel and painted porcelain



Silver



Wood

Ivory



Ivory



Wood

Carved Tortoiseshell



XII.

Japan

The art in which the lacquered inlay is inserted into the previously engraved form in the main material is called 'shibayama'. The term comes from the name of Shibayama (a town located in Japan). Small, often microscopic, elements are placed in an engraved relief. The main material here was mostly ivory, but the technique was also used to craft objects made of tortoiseshell, mother-of-pearl, and (for larger objects) wood. Hiramakie technique, or rather many variations of this lacquer-sprinkling technique called maki-e, has been known in Japan almost since the 12th century. Masters fill the reliefs in ivory or tortoiseshell items with gold, silver, and other impressive paints. Japanese makers have also specialised in the komai decorative art, black iron visiting card cases, machined and decorated with gold. Damascening art is nearly similar: chiselling iron encrusted with thin streams of authentic gold.

The Japanese visiting card case is one more example, among many others, of the subtleties of Japanese art and artistic handicraft.



Shibayama



Hiramakie Ivory



Hiramakie Lacquer



Stained carvings



Komai and Damascene



Shibayama and Hiramakie





Carvings and Hiramakie



Komai, Damascene



Tortoiseshell and horn



Birch bark



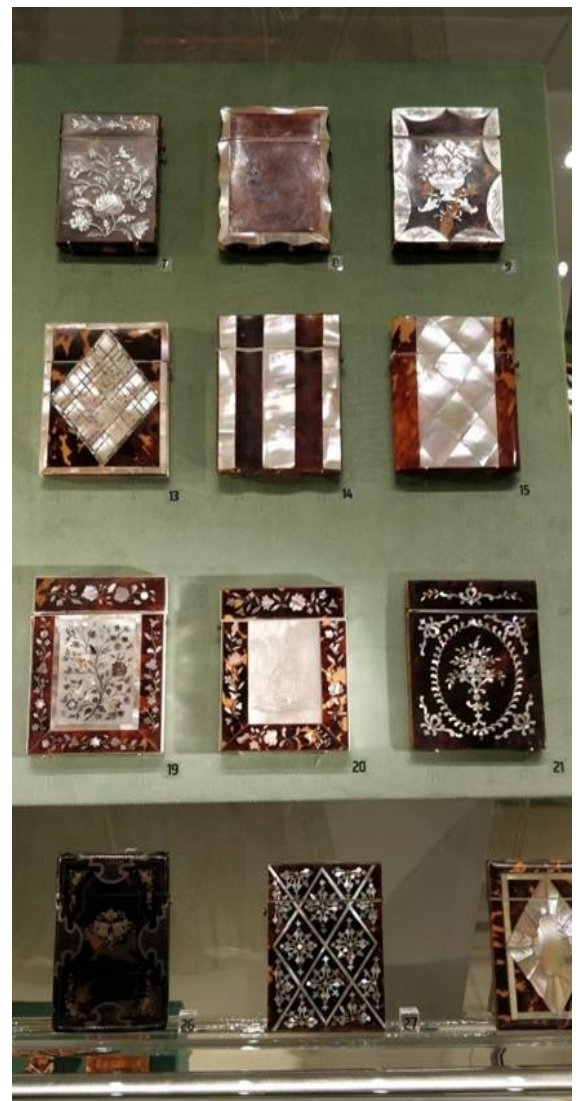
Tortoiseshell Hiramakie



XIII.

Views and display













XIV.

Publications on visiting card cases by Wladimir (Włodzimierz) Herman



The book published on the occasion of the exhibition
in Søllerød Museum /Denmark 2005.



The book published on the occasion of the exhibition
in Wrocław/Poland 2021

The End

14. My books