

Museum of History of Photography in Krakow MHF



by Hubert Francuz and Marta Miskowie , Museum of History of Photography in Krakow

Founded in 1986, the Museum of History of Photography is the only museum in Poland entirely dedicated to photography. It is located a 15 minutes' walk from Krakow's main square in a historic villa built at the beginning of the 20th century. The museum runs a number of departments and holds a variety of different events. The main scope of the museum's activities at present is exhibitions, education and digitization. In each of these fields we are planning and implementing actions in accordance with the MHF mission which emphasizes improving the availability of its collection through a variety of media.

Exhibitions next year will be entirely dedicated to the idea of 'opening'. We will be organizing three complex events presenting never-shown-before parts of our collection. Two of them will concern photography and one will be dedicated to old cinematographic equipment. The exhibition program for 2013 has been designed not only to show the diversity and richness of our collection, but also to be a strong statement, understandable and approachable for visitors.



Photo from Limanowa village, Poland, Klementyna Zubrzycka-B?czkowska.

As mentioned, MHF is particularly interested in implementing and developing high profile digitalization processes. Since 1997 the museum runs its own website and constantly adds more records to its digital catalogue. Since 2010 we have been sharing our collection via an online catalogue. The Internet catalogue built for MHP was one of the first of its kind in Poland. Right now more than 40,000 records with the metadata are available, of which 14,000 are images.



Musill family and Kosiński family in Zakopane, Poland, author unknown, 1927.

An important step in achieving such good results and taking digitalization to the next level was the participation of a program founded and supported by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage. Since 2010 the MHP Department of Digitization has been offering a more and more professional approach to issues related with reproducing vintage photographs.

Although digitization is a very important part of our work, the real treasure is our collection. It includes a large number of portrait-atelier pictures from the 19th century, photographs documenting the civil engineering projects in the Eastern Europe, and social and historical events. The museum also owns an interesting collection of amateur photography taken by unknown authors. This amateur photography, as one the most fascinating phenomena in western culture, has a unique place in our collection.



Construction of the Vistula-Danube canal, Poland, author unknown, ca. 1912.

As a partner of the "Europeana Photography" project, the Museum of History of Photography will make 3,000 images available via the "Europeana" portal. An important part of our contribution will be our collection of autochromes, which is the oldest colour photography technique. Such valuable slides are extremely rare in Polish collections. The Museum houses a collection of 193 autochromes taken by Tadeusz Rżęca, photographer and entrepreneur. Images show historic sites in Krakow and Tarnow, street scenes, foothills and the Tatra Mountains. In "Europeana" we will also be showing small groups of different object, which give almost complete picture of our whole collection.

We are very happy to work with international partners. Europeana Photography is a great chance for our collection to be noticed by a wide audience all over the world.



Museum website: <http://www.mhf.krakow.pl/>

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