

The aim of the project is to analyze the phenomenon of intended non-completion and deconstruction of late medieval works created north of the Alps, specifically in the Holy Roman Empire and in the Low Countries. The “intentional incompleteness” covers therefore both originally non-completed, semi-damaged and secondary incomplete products. This feature of artworks has so far been recognized mainly in Italian art as a mannerist *non finito* and *rotto* respectively. The scope of the impact of “incompleteness” is wide, because it covers the “liveliness” of the unfinished or damaged surface, the desire to fulfill the blank space in the print, the contrasts between the finished and the unfinished within one thing and the recipient's focus on what has been recognized as incomplete. The ambition of the project is to introduce a new category of intentionally incomplete works to scholarship on fifteenth and sixteenth century Northern European art and collecting culture; to juxtapose this category with the Italian *non finito* and *rotto*, in order to understand the differences and common features of perceptions in both regions; to explain a wide range of functions of such objects; to systematize various attitudes towards this class of objects among early modern recipients.

The material will include objects and written sources relevant to the subject. The collectible artworks to be analyzed represent a wide variety of genres, material and techniques. The writings include mainly inventories of particular collections, treatises, handbooks. The ambition of this project is to examine the reception of such objects by members of the urban and court elite of the Empire and the Low Countries in the years 1430-1530. The proposed time frame corresponds to the beginning of the activity of the Franco-Flemish and Brabant masters' workshops in the cities of Burgundy, the closing date marks the German reaction against Italianizing fashion, which is the result of the tension between the fascination with the 'foreign' and the discovery of what is 'native' German. Hitherto, non-completed and incomplete objects created north of the Alps have not been regarded as a common and independent phenomenon. The category lacks systematic scrutiny. In the proposed project, a relatively large and diverse group of items will be analysed in the context of the main category of “incompleteness”. The common feature of being non-completed and incomplete establishes a new class in the space of a *Kunstkammer*, where not only precious and costly materials were kept. This perspective is essential to expand the knowledge of the late medieval/early modern collecting history: it gives an insight into the interests of the court and urban elites, enriches the knowledge of craftsman-donor relationship, enables to understand the changed perception of what was seen as art itself.

Unfinished products have so far been “hooked up” to other classes, which were validating their existence. The main aim of the project is to change this well-established distinction and eventually to recognize the intentional blurring of the boundary between finite and infinite as an artistic category in specific time and space. The project wants to challenge the view that unfinished objects were only an unsuccessful experiment or workshop's reject and see them from a more positive perspective that of the modern collector who ennobled them as sought-after objects. The phenomenon to be investigated is not only underexplored, but also usually associated with the Italian *non finito* and regarded as its descendant. A verification of such perception of this group of objects is essential for the proposed project. When one considers artistic practices, one discovers various instances of connections between unfinished sculptures and paintings revealing the process of creation, instances of intentional incompleteness, e.g. engravings “demanding” to give them a clear sense by filling the empty banderoles with comments, bound in silver faulty ceramic pieces, mechanical toys recorded in the inventories, etc. and early technological treatises.

The research plan includes the following work packages: the catalogue of “non completed” and “incomplete” objects, based on field research and review of the literature; the catalogue of written source references mostly based on archival and library queries; close examination of technical details of objects collected in the catalogue; comparative analysis of the collected material, which will lead to the identification and development of research issues: coexistence of various materials of the quality of “incompleteness” among one group of objects, links between the interest for the artistic process and collecting non-completed/incomplete/damaged objects, reception of those items by beholders and their functions, both educational and aesthetic.

Preparation of at least two comprehensive scholarly articles to peer-reviewed, research journals (e.g. *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin*) and active participation in at least two international conferences (e.g. The Courtauld Symposium) will be ultimate results of the project.