

# Polish artists in the circle of the Vienna Secession in the years 1897–1919

modus

prace z historii sztuki  
art history journal  
xxi, 2021



Wersja polska – s. 123

## Introduction to the discussion of the artistic milieu of the Vienna Secession and Polish artists within it

“Der Zeit ihre Kunst, der Kunst ihre Freiheit!” – “To every age its art, to every art its freedom!” – is the notion of Ludwig Hevesi, one of the main art critics associated with the Viennese milieu at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>1</sup> It was no coincidence that the programmatic slogan, which served as the movement’s manifesto, was placed in a prominent place, right above the portal of the Vienna Secession Building, erected in 1898 according to the design of Joseph Maria Olbrich (see: Fig. 1). This message perfectly illustrated the approach of a new generation of artists towards art – the approach based on a programmatic separation from traditional cultural institutions, and the rejection of the hitherto dominant influences of academicism. Significant artistic and ideological changes took place in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth century. Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession (also spelled: Sezession) is the full name of an artistic group commonly known as the Wiener Secession – the Vienna Secession, whose members were the initiators of the revolution that took place in Viennese art at that time. The Artists’ Union was founded on April 3, 1897.<sup>2</sup> As part of its activities, it promoted modernist art and, like other salons and exhibition galleries whose establishment quite soon followed, such as Künstlerbund Hagen, Galerie Miethke, or Salon Pisko, it broke with the monopoly that the Künstlerhaus had hitherto held in terms of art exhibitions.

The subject of this article, however, is not so much the milieu of Viennese artists as the close relationship between artistic life in the capital of Austria-Hungary on the Danube and Polish art.<sup>3</sup> The intense nature of these relations was of course

MICHAŁ SZAREK



**1.** Joseph Maria Olbrich, the Vienna Secession Building, 1898. Postcard from the collection of the Wien Museum, early 20<sup>th</sup> century, inventory no. 52923/8  
→ see p. 124

1 L. Hevesi, *Die Wiener Secession und ihr ‘Ver Sacrum’*, “Kunstgewerbeblatt”, 10, 1899, No. 8, p. 141.

2 Ibidem.

3 The article is based on the MA thesis *Artyści polscy w kręgu Secesji Wiedeńskiej 1897–1919 – projekt wystawy* [Polish Artists in the Circle of the Vienna Secession 1897–1919 – an exhibition

influenced by the political dependence of some of the Polish lands on the Habsburg Monarchy after the Partitions, which is why we will mainly talk about artists from the circle of the Towarzystwo Artystów Polskich “Sztuka” [Society of Polish Artists “Sztuka”], founded on May 27, 1897 in Kraków, under the Austrian administration.<sup>4</sup> After the Grand Duchy of Kraków [Wielkie Księstwo Krakowskie] was incorporated into the Austrian partition in 1846, Kraków served as the capital of Western Galicia and, next to Warsaw and Lviv, it was one of the most important centres for the development of Polish culture. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the city also gained the status of the national capital of art and culture, bringing together the majority of significant artists, writers and thinkers. As noted by Anna Brzyski, despite the fact that Kraków was a much smaller urban hub than Vienna or even Prague, this did not prevent the creation of a strong cultural hotbed in this former royal city, where the Society of Polish Artists “Sztuka” had been founded – a group with a new, modernist character.<sup>5</sup> In addition to a large group of European artists, the Vienna Secession brought together mainly artists from the territories of the Habsburg Monarchy. This was also a propaganda tool, serving to emphasize the cohesion and, at the same time, the cultural diversity of the vast and ethnically heterogeneous Empire.

As noted by Dorota Kudelska, it was the “Sztuka” Society that played a key role in maintaining Polish contacts with the Vienna Secession. Initially, the artists independently proposed the works that they wanted to present at the exhibitions, but over time the Kraków society took the initiative and became primarily responsible for communication with the Secession, as well as for the selection of objects.<sup>6</sup> The first group exhibition in 1902 (“xv. Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession Wien”) revealed the endeavour of the “Sztuka” Society to manifest institutional separateness as well as visual and spatial distinctiveness of the works by Polish artists, displayed on their own, in dedicated rooms.<sup>7</sup> In the years to follow, this state of affairs gave rise to numerous conflicts and caused some artists who were dissatisfied with the selection made by the board of the Kraków-based Society to withdraw from the circle of the Wiener Secession.<sup>8</sup>

An important objective of this article is to systematize the information about the presence of Polish artists’ works at Viennese exhibitions – the information that so far has been scattered across various sources. Based on the collected information, an attempt was made to reconstruct individual exhibitions in terms of the participation of Polish artists. From the entire collected data, dualism of the Polish art of that time emerges – strongly emphasized already at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: it tended to manifest attachment to the national tradition,

project], written at the Institute of Art History of the Jagiellonian University in 2019 under the supervision of professor Andrzej Szczerski, whom I would like to thank for his help and valuable substantive tips.

4 W. Juszcak, *Towarzystwo Artystów Polskich Sztuka*, in: *Polskie życie artystyczne w latach 1890–1914*, A. Wojciechowski (ed.), Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków 1967, p. 187.

5 A. Brzyski, *Vienna Secession, Hagenbund, Sztuka and Mánes: Competition and Strategic Collaboration among Central European Art Groups*, “Centropa”, 11, 2011, No. 1, p. 8.

6 D. Kudelska, *Między Secesją a Hagenbundem – artyści polscy w Wiedniu 1898–1914*, “Pamiętnik Sztuk Pięknych”, 10, 2015, pp. 191–193.

7 Ibidem.

8 Ibidem.

and at the same time, it reflected pan-European, modernist artistic tendencies and ideological currents.

The significant role played by Polish artists during the exhibitions of the Vienna Secession is evidenced by numerous source references to the participation of Poles in the Secession's shows and the considerable number of works that they presented. The catalogues of individual exhibitions remain the main source of information about the activities of the Vienna Secession Artists' Union. Additional information about the works and their creators can be found in numerous articles containing critical reviews of the exhibitions and reproductions of the objects presented therein. Also important are the photographs taken in the exhibition rooms and the lists of works that sold, published sporadically and irregularly within the pages of "Ver Sacrum" journal – in fact, only three such lists appeared throughout the history of this particular journal. Much significant information on Polish artists is also contained in the minutes of the meetings of the Society of Polish Artists "Sztuka", cited by Kudelska.<sup>9</sup>

Nonetheless, it is difficult to fully reconstruct the course of the exhibitions organized by the Vienna Secession, or to identify precisely all the works presented at subsequent shows. The titles included in the catalogues were often assigned to the artworks without consulting the artists, in a conventional and descriptive manner. Artistic techniques were described with a greater degree of consistency. Detailed notes clearly distinguished between graphics or drawings versus oil painting. The same was true of the sculpture, although due to the multitude of casts, it is often difficult to identify specific pieces, even if we have access to the photographs thereof. Without doubt, the reproductions published in magazines, journals, and in exhibition catalogues are highly helpful in this matter,<sup>10</sup> as they make it possible to locate the artworks in museums and private collections, that is, if the objects we seek ever appeared on the art market. Whenever the present location of the given work is known, it is reported in the present paper. Unfortunately, in the case of numerous art objects – even those that have been preserved in reproductions and are known by their title – it is difficult to pinpoint precise information on the subject. Notwithstanding the above, it is the photographs from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, which were never published – neither at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries nor in contemporary times – that provide the most interesting iconographic material. Among a dozen or so objects, it is possible to recognise those photographs that show fragments of exhibition spaces, and takes in which individual works have been captured, which would indicate that Polish art arose quite some curiosity during the exhibitions. The author of most of the aforementioned photographs is an Austrian photographer and sympathizer of the Vienna Secession Artists' Union, Moritz Nähr.

9 Eadem, *Wiedeńskie kontakty "Sztuki" – z zapisów w Księdze Protokołów Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich*, "Annales Universitatis Mariae Curie-Skłodowska Lublin – Polonia. Sectio FF", 35, 2017, No. 1, p. 130.

10 Initially, the first editions of the catalogues of the Secession exhibitions did not include reproductions of the exhibited works. Black-and-white images thereof began to appear regularly, beginning with the catalogue of the twenty-third exhibition, published in the early 1905. Additionally, the catalogue of the thirty-fifth exhibition of January 1909 contained some (but only a few) colour reproductions.



2. August Weber, House of the Horticultural Society (Gartenbaugesellschaft) in Vienna, 1863. Postcard from the collection of the Wien Museum, ca. 1900, inventory no. 167810

→ see p. 127

At this point, we should emphasize how far the process of digitization of archival materials from the era – photographs, journals, magazines and catalogues – facilitated the research process. The materials assembled as part of the digital collections of institutions such as Universitätsbibliothek in Heidelberg, Bibliothek des Belvedere in Vienna, Libraries Internet Archive, or Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna contain a lot of valuable information.

In the context of the reception of Polish art during the Secession exhibitions, the very fact that Polish artists belonged to the group of the Union's Ordinary Members is also significant.<sup>11</sup> As Dorota Kudelska noted, Poles had always been the second largest group of artists in this circle, right after the Austrians.<sup>12</sup> Polish artists undeniably constituted an integral part of this international exhibition milieu from the very beginning of its functioning. As Roman Taborski pointed out, Poles were already among the members of the Union in 1897, and the founding members included Julian Fałat and Kazimierz Pochwalski, although the latter quickly left the ranks of the Union.<sup>13</sup>

### **An attempt at a chronological analysis of the Polish artists' participation in exhibitions, based on source materials**

The beginnings of the exhibition activity of the Vienna Secession Artists' Union are inextricably linked with the building of the House of the Horticultural Society (Gartenbaugebäude) at Parkring No. 12 (see: Fig. 2), which no longer exists today, where the inaugural exhibition of the group was launched on March 26, 1898. The Secession as an organisation, established a year before that, did not yet have its own quarters, therefore it used the Gartenbaugebäude space, consisting of several interconnected rooms, and adapted it to its own exhibition purposes. Soon, however, already in the years 1897–1898, the building at Karlsplatz (Friedrichstraße 12) was erected according to the design of Joseph Maria Olbrich. The new facility became the site of subsequent Secession exhibitions, organized here continuously since the autumn of 1898.

Polish artists presented their works already since the inaugural exhibition of Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession, held from March 26 to June 15, 1898. As members of the society, they formed a relatively sizeable group, which survived in an unchanged configuration until the tenth exhibition of the Viennese Secession.<sup>14</sup> Among the ten artists there were mainly representatives of the Kraków milieu – lecturers of the local School of Fine Arts: Teodor Axentowicz, Julian Fałat, Jacek Malczewski, Józef Mehoffer, Jan Stanisławski, and Leon Wyczółkowski.

11 Until 1918, the Secession divided its members into two groups – Ordinary Members (O. M. – *Ordentlich Mitglied*) and Corresponding Members, i.e. Honorary Members (K. M. – *Korrespondierend Mitglied*). The group of Ordinary Members included mainly Austrians and representatives of other nationalities operating within the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and thus also Polish artists. The group of Corresponding or Honorary Members was made up of foreign artists. The group of Polish members was made up primarily of artists from the “Sztuka” society and the Kraków milieu. Importantly, during the exhibitions of the Secession, it was not only its members, but also guest artists, who exhibited their works.

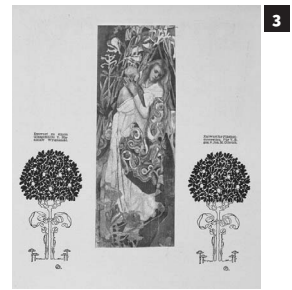
12 D. Kudelska, *Wiedeńskie kontakty “Sztuki”*, p. 130.

13 R. Taborski, *Wypiański – Wiedeń – “Secesja”*, in: *Stulecie Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich “Sztuka”*, A. Baranowa (ed.), Kraków 2001, p. 93.

14 *Katalog der I. Kunst-Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs*, (Vienna, 26 March – 15 June 1898), Wien 1898, p. 9.

The members of the Secession also included painters such as Stanisław Wyspiański or Włodzimierz Tetmajer. In this context, mention should also be made of Wacław Szymanowski, who resided in Paris, and Stanisław Dębicki of Lviv. Interestingly, the latter, although he remained a member of the grouping until 1918, did not show a single work at the exhibitions of the Secession. We should also note that during the first show, not all the members exhibited their works. At that time, the works of Tetmajer, Szymanowski, and Malczewski were missing from the exhibition. All in all, the inaugural exhibition of the Viennese Secession featured a total of 25 works by Polish artists, which were diverse thematically and stylistically. Wyspiański showed, among his other works, the *Polonia* and the *Caritas* (see: Fig. 3) – pastel designs of stained glass windows for the Lviv cathedral, made in the years 1893–1894 (*Polonia* in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków), and three drawings from the series of illustrations to Homer’s *Iliad* – the *Aurora* created in 1897 (National Museum in Warsaw), *Apollo on the Olympus*, and *Heroes’ Ghosts* (both works currently in private collections). In the case of a child’s portrait, also included in the exhibition, we can only speculate about whether it was the same one as the composition published in that year in the seventh issue of the Secession’s journal as “Studie für Fresco”. Other Polish artists presented numerous landscapes and portraits. Two works by Mehoffer certainly merit a special mention – the *Muse*, which reveals a Symbolist quality (1897, the National Museum in Poznań) and, most likely, the *Singer* (1896, Lviv Art Gallery), for which his sister-in-law Wanda Janakowska sat as a model. Presumably it was the *Singer*, reproduced in “Ver Sacrum” journal, that Hermann Bahr devoted a whole paragraph to in his review of the first exhibition, describing this work as a “portrait of the soul” and comparing it with the creations of James Abbott McNeill Whistler.<sup>15</sup> Also noteworthy is the unidentified winter landscape by Józef Chełmoński, who took part in the exhibition as a guest, and the image of Christ painted by Wyczółkowski, also visible in one of the two archival photographs in the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek collection (reference number Pk 2539, 2), showing the first room (see: Fig. 4). The work was placed in one of the corners of that room, on an ornamental pedestal, among furniture, sculptures, and plants. Despite the poor quality of the print, it can be surmised that the painting shown in the photograph is an oil version of a motif frequently recurring in Wyczółkowski’s work – the image of Queen Jadwiga’s Crucifix from the Wawel Cathedral, painted in 1896 and currently belonging to the collection of the National Museum in Kraków. Another photograph from the same source (reference number 124999 E) shows Wyczółkowski’s painting described as “Herrnporträt”, which is the artist’s self-portrait dated 1897 (District Museum in Bydgoszcz). As reported by the “Neue Freie Presse”, the exhibition was viewed on April 4, 1898 by the Emperor Franz Joseph I himself, who took exceptional notice of the works by Stanisław Wyspiański and Józef Mehoffer and expressed his praise accordingly.<sup>16</sup> The drawing by Rudolf Bacher kept at the Wien Museum on Karlsplatz shows this particular event (see: Fig. 5). The author portrayed the Emperor standing in the first room of the exhibition building, with the aforementioned Leon Wyczółkowski’s *Christ* visible in the background.

Also during the next exhibition, organized at the end of the same year, numerous works of Polish art were presented. Five members of the association exhibited over



3. Stanisław Wyspiański, *Caritas*, 1893–1894. Photo after: “Ver Sacrum”, 1, 1898, No. 7, p. 2  
→ see p. 127



4. View of the first room during the first exhibition of the Vienna Secession, 1898. Photo from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, reference no. Pk 2539, 2  
→ see p. 128



5. Rudolf Bacher, Emperor Franz Joseph visiting the first Vienna Secession exhibition at the House of the Horticultural Society, 1898. Photo from the collection of the Wien Museum, inventory no. 66223, cco, after: <<https://sammlung.wienmuseum.at/en/object/39888/>>  
→ see p. 129

15 H. Bahr, *Secession*, Wien 1900, p. 30.

16 R. Taborski, *Wyspiański – Wiedeń – “Secesja”*, p. 94.





6. View of the first room during the eighth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1900. Photo after: *Katalog der x. Kunst-Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession, Wien 1901*, p. 31  
→ see p. 130

a dozen landscapes and portraits, including one of the sketches for the panorama of *Napoleon in the Battle of Berezina* by Fałat, probably made during the development of this monumental composition, created in the 1890s in collaboration with Wojciech Kossak. Also shown is Mehoffer's *Conversation* of 1896 – or more precisely, one of the two versions of this work, currently in the collection of the Lviv Art Gallery. In that same exhibition, Konstanty Laszczka presented a plaster portrait bust of the poet Wacław Rolicz-Lieder, and Wacław Szymanowski exhibited a sculpture entitled *Caryatids* (1896, National Museum in Kraków). According to the list published in the “Ver Sacrum” journal, among those works featured at the exhibition, which found buyers, there were three paintings by Axentowicz: *Head of a girl with a laurel wreath*, *Study of a head*, and *Head of a girl*, and two landscapes by Stanisławski: *Abendstimmung* and *Thistles*.<sup>17</sup> The year 1898 was a successful period for the Poles exhibiting with the Secession, which was reflected in the reproductions of their works, frequently featured within the pages of “Ver Sacrum”.

After the very successful debut of Polish artists, the next four exhibitions took place without their participation. The third, fourth, and fifth exhibitions presented various works of randomly selected artists, whereas the sixth was devoted to Japanese art. Relevant information on this period can be found in the annual reports of the Society of Polish Artists “Sztuka”. In particular, we are referring to the intended Polish exhibition, which was meant to be held in the late autumn of 1899 as part of the fifth exhibition and would occupy the entire pavilion, and yet the plan did not come to fruition through the fault of the Poles.<sup>18</sup> As Kudelska wrote further in her article, in the years 1901–1907 the idea of this type of undertaking was raised again, repeatedly, but in the end it was never implemented.<sup>19</sup> Apparently, the reason for this was the reluctance on the part of the board of the Vienna Secession, disappointed by the earlier inconsistency of the Poles who had failed to provide the appropriate number of works, and at the same time expressed exorbitant financial expectations.

The works by Polish artists appeared again only during the seventh exhibition of the Vienna Secession, which lasted from March to May 1900. Fałat, Stanisławski, and Axentowicz presented a total of nine paintings and engravings, and Bolesław Biegas sent in one of his sculptures, entitled *David*. Considering the works reproduced in the same year in “Ver Sacrum”, we should assume that Stanisławski's *Crosses in the Wilderness* (private collection) and *Dusk* (1900, National Museum in Kraków) were exhibited among the selection. The second of the two aforementioned works also appeared at the exhibition in a graphic version, along with other drawings by the artist.

At the autumn exhibition of 1900 – which was also a collective show, similarly to the previous ones – relatively few Polish works were presented. The exhibition space featured only 12 paintings by two Poles – Julian Fałat and Józef Mehoffer. The latter mainly exhibited stained glass designs on cardboard, made for the Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Freiburg – two parts each of two compositions: *Our Lady of Victory* (see: Fig. 6), and *Martyrs* (1897–1899, National Museum in Kraków). Szymanowski presented four pieces that are difficult to identify today, of which he sold

17 *Liste der verkauften Werke*, “Ver Sacrum”, 2, 1899, No. 1, p. 33.

18 D. Kudelska, *Wiedeńskie kontakty “Sztuki”*, p. 131.

19 *Ibidem*, pp. 132–134.

three – *The Plague*, *The Porter*, and the *Faun and the Bacchante*, and was the only Polish artist who found buyers for his works.<sup>20</sup>

Poles did not take part in the ninth exhibition. Their works appeared only at the next, jubilee exhibition, organized in the spring of 1901. This time Bolesław Biegas presented five of his sculptures, including the composition *The Beginning of the World*, placed separately in a representative location, namely the main entrance hall of the building. The photograph reproduced in 1901 in the ninth issue of “Ver Sacrum” shows two other compositions by the same artist, positioned on both sides of the passage between the rooms. These were the *Conversation of thoughts* and *The End of the World* (see: Fig. 7). On that occasion, the sculptor’s works, as one of the few Polish pieces, inspired great interest on the part of Ludwig Hevesi. The art critic saw in them a combination of the artist’s individual style, in which one can perceive features characteristic for the trends in Polish art at the time, and the evident influence of August Rodin. No wonder: Biegas brilliantly compiled in the structure of his works the leading formal and ideological tendencies, prevalent in European sculpture at the time – namely, Symbolism and Secession (or Art Nouveau).<sup>21</sup> For the first time Włodzimierz Tetmajer’s works were featured in the Viennese exhibition – two canvases on folk themes. Although he had been a member of the Artists’ Union from the very beginning of the Secession’s existence, he had not yet participated in its exhibitions. The titles of the paintings indicate that among the featured works was his composition depicting an episode from the legend of Piast, and one of the scenes of Easter food blessing in Bronowice. In addition, 12 other works were exhibited, authored by Axentowicz, Mehoffer, Stanisławski, and Szymanowski.<sup>22</sup> After the show had ended, Axentowicz’s *Pastel head*, Stanisławski’s *Polish landscape* and Szymanowski’s *Reaper* sculpture were purchased.

During later exhibitions, interest in Polish art again seems to have lessened. The eleventh exhibition was entirely devoted to one artist – Johann Victor Krämer. At that time, in 1901, the Secession gained a new member of Polish origin. Bolesław Biegas, who had so far exhibited as a guest, now formally joined the ranks. During the autumn show, which was the last exhibition that year, Polish art was represented only by two bronzes, works of Wacław Szymanowski. One of these was a different version of the previously presented Caryatid motif, referred to in the literature as *Caryatids III*, probably made in 1901 or before that date.<sup>23</sup> The aforementioned composition later became the core element of Anna and Erazm Jerzmanowski tombstone erected at the Rakowice Cemetery in Kraków. The second sculpture by the same artist on display at that time was one of the versions of *Motherhood*. The exhibition that year was dedicated in particular to artists from Northern Europe – Scandinavia and Russia, which in some way justifies such a poor representation of Polish art. This state of affairs repeated itself during the thirteenth exhibition, open to the public in February and March 1902, when only two sculptural works by Bolesław Biegas – *The World* and *The Book of Life* – were presented from



7. View of the first room during the tenth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1901. Photo after: “Ver Sacrum”, 4, 1901, No. 9, p. 156 → see p. 131

20 *Liste der verkauften Werke*, p. 64.

21 L. Hevesi, *Acht Jahre Sezession (März 1897 – Juni 1905). Kritik – Polemik – Chronik*, Wien 1906, p. 320.

22 *Liste der verkauften Werke*, p. 209.

23 Wacław Szymanowski 1859–1930 (exhibition catalogue, National Museum in Warsaw, June–July 1981), H. Kotkowska-Bareja (ed.), Warszawa 1981, p. 77.



**8.** Plan of the fifteenth Vienna Secession exhibition. Photo after: xv. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession Wien, Nov.–Dez. 1902, Wien 1902*  
→ see p. 132

**9.** View of the third room during the fifteenth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1902. Photo after: “Ver Sacrum”, 5, 1902, No. 22, p. 324  
→ see p. 133

**10.** View of the third room during the fifteenth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1902. Photo after: “Kraj” [“Sztuka i życie” supplement], 1902, No. 46, p. 483  
→ see p. 133

the achievements of Polish artists. At the fourteenth exhibition of the Secession, this time devoted to Ludwig van Beethoven, no Polish works were featured.

It was only during the fifteenth exhibition of the Artists’ Union, which lasted from November to December 1902, that works of Polish art found appreciation and were put on display. The largest (third) room, located at the back of the building, was devoted entirely to artists representing the Society of Polish Artists “Sztuka” (see: Fig. 8). They constituted almost half of all the artists who took part in the exhibition that year. A total of 24 Polish artists presented 49 paintings and drawings, 18 sculptures, and 2 textile pieces. The arrangement of the room assigned exclusively to the Poles was designed by Karol Tichy,<sup>24</sup> who additionally showed his composition titled the *Elegy* (around 1900, National Museum in Warsaw). Most of the Polish members of the Secession presented their works, including numerous representatives of the Kraków community, such as Konstanty Laszczka or Wojciech Weiss, artists from Warsaw represented, among others, by Józef Pankiewicz and Józef Chełmoński, as well as artists associated with other centres, such as Olga Boznańska, who then resided in Paris. The photographs reproduced in the Viennese periodical “Ver Sacrum” (see: Fig. 9) and the Polish weekly “Kraj” (see: Fig. 10) are today’s only remaining iconographic sources revealing the exhibition space with Polish objects. Positioned along the longest wall of the room were large-format stained glass designs by Stanisław Wyspiański for the Wawel Cathedral, made in the years 1900–1902 (National Museum in Krakow). In the centre, representation of *King Kazimierz Wielki* had been placed, flanked by two terracotta tiles by Szymanowski, both entitled *Triton*, their reproductions later included in the twenty-third issue of “Ver Sacrum” of that same year. Next to it, another design by Wyspiański – *Saint Stanislaus* – had been presented. Presumably, the third work belonging in this group – *King Henryk Pobożny* – was placed, by analogy, to the left of *King Kazimierz Wielki* and the accompanying terracotta tiles. On the same wall, between Wyspiański’s compositions that had been captured in the photographs, we can also see Stanisławski’s works – four landscape studies in small formats, and the *Moonrise* (ca. 1900, Belvedere in Vienna, a piece taken over from the Kunsthistorisches Museum). The works of this master of the symbolic landscape were flanked by two pastels of Axentowicz – *Under the Burden of Misfortune* (ca. 1900, Lviv Art Gallery) and a portrait of a woman, featuring the motif of a blue vase. The next, shorter wall had a central dominant element in the form of the oil painting of *Earth* by Ferdynand Ruszczyc, of 1898 (National Museum in Warsaw). The painting was surrounded by portrait busts sculpted by Laszczka, placed on tall pedestals (including a portrait of Leon Wyczółkowski); exactly underneath it, a 1901 watercolour by Fałat was placed, titled *The passing train*. In the vicinity, *Portrait of the Parents* by Wojciech Weiss was displayed (1899, deposit at the National Museum in Warsaw). Another, longer wall with two rectangular recesses served as the exhibition space for numerous paintings and sculptures, among which we should note the busts made by Laszczka (including a marble portrait of Maria Fałatowa purchased for the Moderne Galerie collection – now at the Österreichische Galerie Belvedere in Vienna; and the likeness of Feliks ‘Manggha’ Jasieński), as well as works by Szymanowski (a plaster image of Gabriela Szymanowska née Turner; and a bronze version of the *Motherhood*).

24 xv. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession Wien, Nov.–Dez. 1902*, (exhibition catalogue), Wien 1902, p. 26.



Landscapes occupied an important place in this part of the exhibition – including Edward Trojanowski's *View of Kraków's Planty* (National Museum in Warsaw), painted in the year of the exhibition, and three works by Chełmoński – *Partridge in the Snow* (1895, National Museum in Warsaw), *In the Church* (1887, a painting now lost), and *On the farm* (1875, National Museum in Kraków). The folk themes and compositions inspired by the folk cut-outs technique, made by Antonina Sikorska from Czernichów, also merit a mention. Remaining out of shot, not seen in the photographs, was an outstanding work of Art Nouveau symbolism, namely Józef Mehoffer's *Strange Garden* (1903, National Museum in Warsaw), which epitomises the essence of Polish modernist painting. The arrangement of the room was complemented by a centrally positioned set of furniture designed by Hans Vollmer of Vienna, and a bronze sculpture by Szymanowski showing *Mickiewicz after the Improvisation* (1898–1902, National Museum in Kraków) situated on a pedestal; author's description of the subject and symbolism of the latter was included in the exhibition catalogue.

The Polish press reported the spectacular success of the Poles during the fifteenth exhibition. The artists sold many works in Vienna and, most importantly, they received extremely positive reviews from the art critics therein.<sup>25</sup> Among others, Berta Zuckerkandl, Ludwig Hevesi, and Franz Servaes voiced their opinions. Zuckerkandl staunchly emphasized the solid rooting in the ancient, glorious tradition of their nation, determining the emergence of such excellent art, which, in the opinion of the critic, on the one hand had entered a new path, and on the other hand, preserved and nurtured the most important elements of the nation's culture and its past.<sup>26</sup> The fifteenth exhibition of the Vienna Secession and the enormous success of the Polish artists who presented their works therein undoubtedly became an impulse and an incentive for Zuckerkandl to become interested in Polish art. In the same year, the critic's article, *Von neuer polnischer Kunst*, was published, in which she resumed the theme of the Polish works, and further developed the issues she had previously discussed. In her opinion, Polish artists stood out from the crowd, as a tightly knit group with a national character. Zuckerkandl believed that they touched upon the problems of the contemporary world, and that apart from the national style, they also represented pan-European tendencies.<sup>27</sup> Her article, illustrated with numerous reproductions, is extremely important in the context of the reconstruction of the discussed exhibition. First of all, it facilitates the identification of the works that remain out of shot of the aforementioned photographs, as well as the works that are difficult to recognize in the relatively low-quality prints. On this basis, it is essential that we recall Wyspiański's works – *Helenka's Head* from 1900, which, however, is not identical to any of the versions currently stored in the museums of Kraków and Warsaw, and *Self-Portrait*, painted earlier than the corresponding composition from 1903 in the collection of the National Museum in Kraków. Also noteworthy are the paintings whose current locations remain unknown, namely the *Landscape from Poronin* by Fałat from 1902, and Malczewski's *Spring Song*. We must not fail to mention here these further compositions: *The Mill* by Ruszczyk (1898, National Museum in Kraków), *Gypsy* by Stanisław Masłowski (ca. 1877, work

25 *Notatki artystyczne*, "Życie i Sztuka", 2, 1902, No. 51, pp. 542–544.

26 B. Zuckerkandl, *Wiener Kunst-Ausstellungen*, "Die Kunst für Alle", 18, 1903, No. 7, p. 168.

27 Eadem, *Von neuer polnischer Kunst*, "Die Kunst für Alle", 18, 1903, No. 12, p. 280.



11. Cover of the “Ver Sacrum” journal with a drawing by Józef Mehoffer. Photo after: “Ver Sacrum”, 5, 1902, No. 24  
→ see p. 136

destroyed during World War II), and two works by Wyczółkowski – *Self-portrait with Konstanty Laszczka* (1901, National Museum in Kraków) and *Laszczka's Portrait* (1901–1902, Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków).

The exhibition was also discussed at length in Hevesi's article *Weiteres aus der Sezession*, published on November 22, 1902, shortly after the show had opened. The author's tone of was extremely emotional. The critic highlighted what he believed to be the undeniable dissimilarity of the representatives of the Polish nation from other nations, stating that to him the Poles seemed to “breathe a different air”.<sup>28</sup> He saw their art as firmly rooted in the past and saturated with melancholia, grief, hope, and some kind of sadness, as well as the idea of a constant returning to the past. All of these, according to Hevesi, made up “their own inner landscape”. This “landscape” was metaphorically spread across the Polish exhibition room – the visitors walked along a kind of “avenue of sighs”, described by Hevesi using the French expression “grande poussée de tristesse”, which can be translated as “a powerful explosion of sorrow”. The critic's phrases testify to the exceptional artistic quality of the presented works, set in the atmosphere of an epoch filled with symbolism and marked by existential dilemmas.

The end of 1902 was exceptional for Polish art for many reasons. In addition to the spectacular success of the exhibition, the Polish context was also clearly outlined in the “Ver Sacrum” journal. Its final, twenty-fourth issue was entirely devoted to Józef Mehoffer and contained 16 reproductions of drawing studies made by this artist (see: Fig. 11). The cover of the magazine was decorated with an expressive and symbolist image of a figure of half-Pegasus, half-woman.

These events were followed by a period of stagnation. The Union's sixteenth exhibition, held from January to February 1903, was devoted mainly to the art of the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists. During the spring show held in the same year, only one work by one Polish artist was presented – a sculpture by Bolesław Biegas. Polish works were missing from the two exhibitions that followed, including the eighteenth, which had the works of Gustaw Klimt as the main subject. Polish art had its modest representation during the twentieth exhibition, held in March and April 1904: only three works by Józef Mehoffer, noticed by Ludwig Hevesi.<sup>29</sup> Among them were the now lost design for the stained glass titled *Vita somnium breve*, created in the year of the exhibition, and two studies for portraits, including one of the artist's wife.

More works by Poles appeared only at the twenty-third exhibition in 1905. In addition to the works of the Secession members, these included paintings by Wojciech Weiss (including *Tadzio with toys*, 1902, private collection), by Ludwik Misky, and by Stefan Filipkiewicz – the latter frequently exhibited his works from that time onward. The above-mentioned exhibition also features mountain landscapes by Leon Wyczółkowski, romantic views by Jan Stanisławski, as well as portraits by Teodor Axentowicz – the likeness of the Kraków Mayor Józef Friedlein (Wielopolski Palace in Kraków), and *The Rusyn Woman* – one of the versions of this author's composition known as *Candlemas*. Konstanty Laszczka presented only one sculpture. At the same exhibition, Stanisław Wyspiański displayed his work for the last time, showing mainly pastels on children's themes, including the *Girl*

<sup>28</sup> L. Hevesi, *Acht Jahre Sezession*, p. 402.

<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, pp. 466–467.

with a *Vase of Flowers* from 1902 (National Museum in Kraków). Józef Mehoffer, in turn, exhibited his well-known work in the style of Orientalism, entitled *Europa jubilans* from 1905 (Lviv Art Gallery). A total of 21 Polish works appeared in Vienna on that occasion. Critics were particularly interested in Mehoffer's *Europa jubilans*, in Wyspiański's pastels, and in the likeness of a Ukrainian girl by Axentowicz, as expressed in their statements from that time – notably, by Berta Zuckerkandl<sup>30</sup> and Amelia Sarah Levetus.<sup>31</sup>

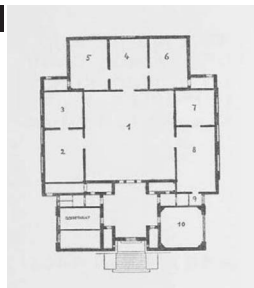
The next exhibition, opened in November 1905, was devoted entirely to sacred art. Some parts of the building, in terms of their layout and architectural form, resembled spaces characteristic of sacred buildings, and that feature was made use of in the exhibition's arrangement. The show brought together works of numerous authors dealing with religious themes. Despite the fact that many Polish artists of that time focused their attention on this particular sphere, the works by only one of them were featured – namely, by Józef Mehoffer, who was the most renowned and enjoyed most recognition in Europe. The selection of his pieces was an accurate overview of the artist's oeuvre to date, and it included even those works that were created in the year of the exhibition. Already in the main hall of the building, two paintings made on plaster were displayed, of which today it is possible to unambiguously identify one: namely, the *Delighted Angels* from 1901 (National Museum in Kraków), a composition that was originally meant to decorate the treasury of the Wawel Cathedral, but was never realized in the intended location. The artist's other works were displayed in the first room. These included numerous designs on cardboard, of stained glass windows for the cathedrals in Freiburg and at Wawel, for the castle chapel in Baranów Sandomierski, the funerary chapel of the Grauer family in Opava, and for the church of St. Elizabeth in Jutrosin. Also displayed were the designs for polychrome decorations made for the cathedral in Płock – the cross-section of the temple (1901, Masovian Museum in Płock), and the *Angel* (1904, National Museum in Poznań). A theme of paintings in the treasury of the Wawel cathedral was also featured, in the form of stained glass designs on cardboard: *Angels with stars* (1901, National Museum in Kraków), *Archangel Gabriel and Archangel Michael* (1901, National Museum in Poznań), and *Snakes among the roses* (1901, National Museum in Kraków) – the latter work was a design for the decoration of window embrasures.

While reviewing this exhibition, Hevesi deplored the lack of publicity accompanying Mehoffer's works, which he considered to be excellent both in terms of composition and form.<sup>32</sup> The critic showed great admiration for this painter's work and – most importantly – he declared Mehoffer to be the uncontested leader among the artists who dealt with monumental painting. In support of his theses, Hevesi listed the works on the basis of which he awarded the creator such an elevated position. These were cardboard designs for the stained glass windows of the cathedral in Freiburg, designs for the cathedral in Płock with the image of the *Angel* at the fore, and polychrome designs for the treasury of the Wawel cathedral. Whilst writing about the latter, the critic allowed himself an obvious hint in the direction

30 B. Zuckerkandl, *Die xxiii. Ausstellung der Wiener Sezession*, "Die Kunst für Alle", 20, 1905, No. 1, p. 444.

31 S.A. Levetus, *The twenty-third Exhibition of the Vienna Secession*, "The Studio", 36, 1905, No. 47 pp. 58–60.

32 L. Hevesi, *Altkunst – Neukunst. Wien 1894–1908*, Wien 1909, p. 340.



**12.** Plan of the twenty-sixth Vienna Secession exhibition. Photo after: xxvi. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession Wien, März–Mai 1906*, Wien 1906, p. 2  
→ see p. 138

the philistines, as he called them, who did not understand the essence of true art. This testifies to the still resounding echoes of the dispute between Józef Mehoffer and Karol Lanckoroński, which was apparently rather extensively commented in the Viennese circle. In the fourteenth issue of the “Ver Sacrum” journal, in 1903 a comprehensive text by Mehoffer was published, which was a reaction to Lanckoroński’s accusations against the form and content of the polychrome painting in the treasury of the Wawel cathedral.<sup>33</sup> As follows from his statements, Hevesi became yet another apologist of the Polish art, next to Berta Zuckerkandl. The latter critic also supported Mehoffer and his work in her article published a year earlier in “Die Kunst für Alle”.<sup>34</sup>

Shortly after the twenty-fifth exhibition, devoted to the Munich Society of Artists “Die Scholle”, the Polish strand returned to the spring Secession show, which lasted from March to May 1906. Polish artists were then featured in even higher numbers than at the aforementioned exhibition of 1902 – thirty one artists presented a total of 135 works, including paintings and drawings, engravings, sculptures, and embroidery. The importance of Polish art at that time is evidenced firstly by the number of the works on display, and secondly by the scale of the space intended for their exhibition. The “Sztuka” Society had three rooms at their disposal (the fourth, fifth, and sixth), and arranging the décor was the responsibility of Jan Stanisławski, Ferdynand Ruszczyc, and Karol Frycz.<sup>35</sup> As during the fifteenth exhibition, the rooms assigned to Polish artists were located at the back of the building (see: Fig. 12). Furthermore, the works by Polish artists dominated the third room, which was not officially designated for the group. Their works were also found in two other rooms of the building. The group of exhibitors included many artists from Kraków and Warsaw, as well as a few artists from Zakopane, Lviv, and Paris. Jan Stanisławski, Józef Pankiewicz, Władysław Ślewiński, and Leon Wyczółkowski presented remarkably many objects. For the first time, engravings and drawings were displayed – never before had they made up such a significant part of the exhibited works. Pankiewicz in particular presented a lot of etchings with views from France and Italy. An important role was also played by the debuting members of the “Grupa Pięciu” [“Group of Five”]: Mieczysław Jakimowicz, Witold Wojtkiewicz, Jan Rembowski, Leopold Gottlieb, and Vlastimil Hofmann, who had shown works that were innovative in character. According to the reports at the time, the exhibition enjoyed considerable commercial success, which was reaffirmed by the value of the works sold, estimated at around ten thousand crowns.<sup>36</sup>

The collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek has three photographs that allow for a partial reconstruction of the arrangement of some rooms in the Secession building during the above-mentioned exhibition. The first (reference number 124963 C) shows the second room with the *Morgenstimmung* exhibited therein – one of the two paintings by Samuel Hirszenberg, placed second from the right. The next two photographs (reference numbers 124968 C, 124961 E) show a view of the fourth

33 J. Mehoffer, *Glossen über die Kunst. Antwort auf den Brief des Grafen Lanckoroński in Angelegenheit der Restaurierung der Kathedrale auf dem Wawel*, “Ver Sacrum”, 6, 1903, No. 14, pp. 245–261.

34 B. Zuckerkandl, *Hat ein Kunst-Mäcen das Veto-Recht?*, “Die Kunst für Alle”, 19, 1904, No. 2, pp. 48–52.

35 xxvi. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession Wien, März–Mai 1906*, (exhibition catalogue), Wien 1906, p. 22.

36 D. Kudelska, *Wiedeńskie kontakty “Sztuki”*, p. 133.



room, which presented Polish artists' works only (see: Fig. 13, 14). Featured works included the *Portrait of a man* (unidentified as of today) by Olga Boznańska; five landscapes by Stanisławski; a portrait of the painter Samuel Hirszenberg from 1905, also by Boznańska (Lviv Art Gallery); Pankiewicz's nocturne titled *Swans in the Saxon Garden at night* (National Museum in Kraków), created in 1896; *The Portrait of artist's wife (In a summer flat)* by Józef Mehoffer from 1904 (National Museum in Kraków); and an unidentified church interior by Józef Czajkowski. Hanging on the next wall were: one of the versions of the Ślewiński's *Sea* and a sizable canvas by Chełmoński, painted in 1906 – *Prayer before the Battle of Racławice* (National Museum in Wrocław), flanked by two male bust portraits, placed on high pedestals – one by Konstanty Laszczka (portrait of Tadeusz Żuk-Skarszewski from around 1901), and the other by Stanisław Kazimierz Ostrowski (portrait of Tadeusz Miciński). Józef Mehoffer, apart from the portrait of his wife, also presented other works at the exhibition – including a composition on Greek mythology theme, titled *Pegasus and the muses* from 1904, which was then purchased by the Moderne Galleries in Vienna, and a portrait of a girl, at the time known under the designation of *Helcia*.

The critic Karl Michael Kuzmány aptly commented on the large representation of Polish artists who presented their works at the exhibition, by comparing them in his review to the “phalanx” that the compact group of Poles had formed.<sup>37</sup> He described the works of the members of the “Sztuka” Society as varied – some he perceived as full of passion, in others he appreciated the serenity, sadness, and melancholy he felt was emanating from them. In his opinion, the national element was also strongly present in Polish creations. Reproductions in the above-mentioned article, and those accompanying other texts from the same period, allow us to conclude that the exhibition also featured pastels by Teodor Axentowicz – the *Gypsy* and the *Portrait of a Lady in a Black Dress* (1906, National Museum in Poznań), and Ferdynand Ruszczyk's *Winter's Fairy Tale* (1904, National Museum in Kraków).

Following the success, it is not surprising that during the twenty-seventh exhibition, organized in the winter of 1906, their works were once again presented in great numbers. Furthermore, the group of the Vienna Secession Artists' Union received three new Polish members: Konstanty Laszczka, Władysław Ślewiński, and Wojciech Weiss. Stefan Filipkiewicz and the aforementioned Ślewiński marked their dominance. As can be observed in the archival photo of the second room (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, reference number 124958 c), the works of the latter artist were displayed on one of the walls, where they were arranged into a clearly premeditated, symmetrical composition. The latter included two pairs of works with parallel themes and similar formats: *Roses* and *Sunflowers*, and the *Stormy Sea* and the *Peaceful Sea*, as well as the work titled *Die Messe*, also known as *In the Church*, located at the very centre (see: Fig. 15). The preserved photographs reveal merely the frames of six more paintings by Ślewiński, placed on the wall on the right-hand side. Interestingly, also in the fourth room many Polish works were featured, and these are visible in another photograph (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, reference number 124960 c) (see: Fig. 16). These were: *A Sunny winter morning* by Stefan Filipkiewicz, i.e. one of the versions of a winter landscape with a stream, displayed as the second work from the left; a work by Julin Fałat showing the theme of an



**13.** View of the fourth room during the twenty-sixth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1906. Photo from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, 1906, reference no. 124968 c  
→ see p. 139

**14.** View of the fourth room during the twenty-sixth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1906. Photo by Moritz Nähr, from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, 1906, reference no. 124961 E  
→ see p. 139

**15.** View of the second room during the twenty-seventh Vienna Secession exhibition, 1906. Photo from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, 1906, reference no. 124958 c  
→ see p. 140

**16.** View of the fourth room during the twenty-seventh Vienna Secession exhibition, 1906. Photo from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, 1906, reference no. 124960 c  
→ see p. 141

37 K.M. Kuzmány, *Die Frühjahr-Ausstellung der Wiener Secession*, “Die Kunst für Alle”, 21, 1906, No. 17, pp. 393.



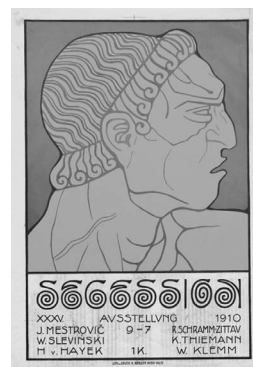
left in the membership ranks remained unfilled, as only Vlastimil Hofmann joined the Secession since.

It was only during the thirty-third exhibition of the Vienna Secession, which was opened in March 1909, that slightly more diverse works by Polish artists were displayed. Polish art was represented by young artists whose works, in most cases, were only beginning to enjoy popularity at exhibitions and were on the rise. This latter group included, among others, Stefan Filipkiewicz, Vlastimil Hofmann, and Alfons Karpiński, who were talented students and heirs of the artistic legacy of Jan Stanisławski. A total of 21 Polish works were on display, mainly by artists who did not belong to the Secession, such as Abraham Neumann, Artur Markowicz, and Jan Rembowski. The photograph preserved in the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (reference number 124939 E) shows an unframed work by Vlastimil Hofmann: the *Madonna*, identified in the catalogue as *Madonna, Abend*. The photograph was probably taken during the assembly of the exhibition, and the selection of this particular work suggests the attention, which it must have enjoyed.

After the thirty-fourth exhibition, dedicated to the works of Josef Engelhart, the Secession organized a show at the beginning of 1910 devoted to a group of six artists, among whom one of the Polish members of the Artists' Union – Władysław Ślewiński – took pride of place. His works were juxtaposed within two exhibition rooms with the sculptures of Ivan Meštrović, an artist of Croatian origin, who was also responsible for the design of the exhibition's catalogue cover and the exhibition poster (see: Fig. 18). Ślewiński presented twenty-two paintings on that occasion. Today it is difficult to clearly identify individual compositions, mainly due to their conventional titles and the presence of frequently repeated motifs in the painter's work. However, the catalogue includes several reproductions, which make it possible to recognize certain specific works by Ślewiński. And so, among the still lifes, we should point out the one with the head of a bear (1907, Lviv Art Gallery), and among the images of women, a romantic nude, the current location of which remains unknown. It is also worth noting the landscapes exhibited by the artist in Vienna. Among them there are views from Kazimierz Dolny on the Vistula River, including *A street in Kazimierz* (1909, National Museum in Warsaw), unidentified sea landscapes from Brittany, and a single mountain landscape, showing Zakopane in a winter season, created in 1896 (private collection).

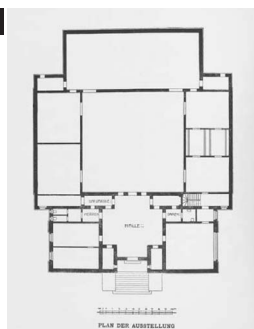
The thirty-sixth exhibition, inaugurated in April 1910, featured the works of seven Polish artists. Władysław Jarocki, Artur Markowicz, Maria Płonowska, Jan Talaga, Alfons Karpiński, Stefan Filipkiewicz and Vlastimil Hofmann have displayed their paintings on various themes.

Another interesting initiative of the Secession was the thirty-seventh exhibition, held at the end of the same year. The exhibition was devoted to art created by women and was titled "Die Kunst der Frau". The exhibition included works of ancient and modern art. Olga Boznańska, representative of the latter category and the only Polish woman, displayed her now unidentified painting, albeit reproduced in the catalogue as the *Portrait of a Woman*. Although only this single Polish painting appeared at the exhibition, it caught the attention of Karl Michael Kuzmany.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, during this period significant changes took place in the composition of the Artists' Union, which gained three new members: Władysław Jarocki, Alfons Karpiński,



18. Ivan Meštrović, poster for the thirty-fifth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1910, National Gallery of Australia in Parkes, inventory no. 114566. Photo after: <<https://tinyurl.com/22jdna3f>> → see p. 143

42 K.M. Kuzmány, *Die Kunst der Frau*, "Die Kunst für Alle", 26, 1911, No. 9, p. 201.



**19.** Plan of the thirty-ninth Vienna Secession exhibition. Photo after: XXXIX. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession, Secession Wien, Nov. 1911 – Jänner 1912*, Wien 1911, p. 12  
→ see p. 144

and Jan Talaga, who had already presented their works at previous exhibitions of the Vienna Secession.

The thirty-eighth exhibition, held in 1911, shows the works of various artists, including the pieces of the aforementioned and other Polish painters, such as Angelika Czarnowska or Stanisław Kamocki, admitted to the Secession at the end of 1911. Abraham Neumann presented the highest number of works. Seven of his landscapes and still lifes were displayed, which – like many other works from that time – are difficult to identify today.

Another show with a strong Polish accent was the thirty-ninth exhibition, which lasted from November 1911 to January of the following year. The two rooms on the ground floor on the left-hand side were entirely devoted to the artistic duo of Jacek Malczewski and Waław Szymanowski (see: Fig. 19). According to a short note published in early November 1911 in the pages of the “*Krakowski Miesięcznik Artystyczny*” [“*Kraków’s Artistic Monthly*”], another painter, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, was also meant to take part in this exhibition, and the Secession planned to devote the entire exhibition building to Polish artists.<sup>43</sup> For reasons unknown, ultimately these intentions were changed. The works by both artists were selected in Kraków by Josef Engelhart and Friedrich König, and Szymanowski himself was responsible for arranging the exhibition space in Vienna.<sup>44</sup> As Kudelska noted, the exhibition was organized thanks to the efforts of this sculptor and Julian Makarewicz, a Kraków-based artist, professor at the Academy of Fine Arts and conservator of monuments.<sup>45</sup>

In total, 40 paintings and 34 sculptural works (models, one design, and completed sculptures) had been presented. The exhibition included works by Malczewski with a symbolist meaning, including his *Spring*. *Landscape with Tobias* from 1904; the *Vicious Circle* that he painted in the years 1895–1897; *Melancholia* created in the period 1890–1894 (all three works in the collection of the National Museum in Poznań); as well as one of the versions of *Death of Ellenai* and numerous landscapes and portraits of the painter’s family members. Among them there were also works that can be identified today thanks to the reproductions featured in the catalogue of the exhibition – the portrait of the artist’s son Rafał from 1901 (private collection); the likeness of his sister Bronisława from 1904 (National Museum in Poznań); or the portrait of his wife Maria painted in 1905, purchased from artist after the exhibition, and currently stored in the collections of the Belvedere in Vienna. Among his other works, Szymanowski presented a model for his composition of *Procession to Wawel*, made in 1911, along with models of its individual fragments; a model of the Chopin Monument; a sculpture of *Erlking*, and *Mickiewicz after Improvisation*, already shown in Vienna in 1902. The artist created short descriptions of form, content, and the symbolism of each exhibited work, which were included in the exhibition catalogue. Furthermore, the space of the ninth room, located on the first floor of the building, was occupied by the design of the *Procession to Wawel*, most likely a drawing integrated into the architecture of the Wawel Royal Castle, and possibly identical with the reproduction included in the catalogue.

43 L., *Kronika Wystaw. Z Wiednia*, “*Krakowski Miesięcznik Artystyczny*”, 1, 1911, No. 9, p. 104.

44 XXXIX. *Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession, Secession Wien, Nov. 1911 – Jänner 1912*, (exhibition catalogue), Wien 1911, p. 13.

45 D. Kudelska, *Malczewski i Wiedeń – nowe ustalenia*, “*Roczniki Humanistyczne*”, 65, 2017, No. 4, p. 56.



A photograph from this exhibition also survives in the Viennese collection (reference number 124935 E). Seen in the photo is the first exhibition room, in which a wooden model of the Warsaw Chopin Monument was placed, made by Wacław Szymanowski on a scale of 1:2, surrounded with numerous plaster and bronze models of fragments of the already mentioned *Procession to Wawel* and the sculptures *Portrait of Jacek Malczewski* and *Erlking*, placed on pedestals (see: Fig. 20). Apart from the sculptural works, the photograph also features two paintings by Jacek Malczewski. The same image was published in the forty-sixth issue of “Tygodnik Ilustrowany” [“Illustrated Weekly”] in 1911. The latter included two additional photographs. The first shows the view of the second room with two casts by Szymanowski – the *Motherhood* and the *Funerary monument* flanked by trees planted in pots, surrounded by Malczewski’s paintings, among which it is possible to recognize the *Artist and the Muse* (1898, private collection) and another portrait of his sister, Helena this time (see: Fig. 21). The second photo shows the first room with a view of the bronze model for the *Procession to Wawel*, situated on a wooden architectural platform imitating the arcaded passage between the cathedral and the Wawel Castle in Kraków, designed by the Polish conservator of monuments in charge of the restoration of Wawel compound – Zygmunt Hendel.<sup>46</sup> Other plaster models on display included the likeness of Juliusz Słowacki, *Portrait of Doctor K.*, and *King Bolesław Śmiały*, which was a life-sized study for the above-mentioned composition (see: Fig. 22).

The thirty-ninth exhibition was undoubtedly the last show of the Secession during which Polish artists marked their presence so strongly. Polish works, and most of all Szymanowski’s sculptures, stirred much attention among the public and the critics, as evidenced by the numerous reviews from the period published in both Polish and foreign press. The very concept of the placement of the *Procession to Wawel* was commented extensively. Numerous renowned scholars and thinkers joined in the discussion. Many of them opposed the idea of the design’s implementation in the envisaged place, emphasizing that it would require too much interference in the historic structure of the Wawel Castle. For instance, one such position was adopted by Max Dwořák, who counted among the key representatives of the Viennese conservation school. The form of the works themselves was also discussed, including Malczewski’s paintings, which aroused controversy and, apart from praise, elicited also some critical remarks. Franz Servaes, among others, expressed his mixed feelings about these works in an extensive article published in the journal “Die Kunstwelt” in 1912.<sup>47</sup>

While trying to maintain continuity of the reconstruction of subsequent exhibitions of the Vienna Secession, difficulties arise while we approach the fortieth exhibition, the catalogue of which has not survived or possibly had not been published at all. It is also puzzling that the period between the thirty-ninth and the fortieth exhibition lasted only about one month. It is hard to imagine organizing a show within this short time span. Most probably, for unknown reasons, the scale of the exhibition was much smaller than the previous one, or perhaps it was never held.

By contrast, it is easy enough to analyse the next, forty-first exhibition, which, apart from the works by Polish members of the Secession, also featured many



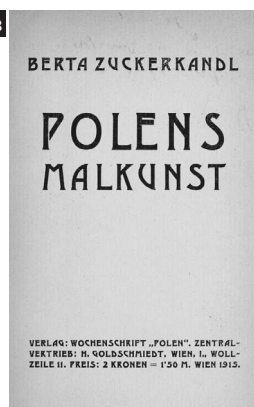
**20.** View of the first room during the thirty-ninth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1911–1912. Photo by Moritz Nähr, from the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek in Vienna, 1911, reference no. 124935 E → see p. 145

**21.** View of the second room during the thirty-ninth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1911–1912. Photo after: “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 52, 1911, No. 46, p. 916 → see p. 146

**22.** View of the first room during the thirty-ninth Vienna Secession exhibition, 1911–1912. Photo after: “Tygodnik Ilustrowany”, 52, 1911, No. 46, p. 917 → see p. 146

46 XXXIX. Ausstellung der Vereinigung Bildender Künstler Österreichs Secession, Wien 1911, p. 16.

47 F. Servaes, *Die Herbstausstellung der Wiener Sezession*, “Die Kunstwelt”, 1, 1912, No. 4, p. 302.



**23.** Title page of Berta Zuckermandl's publication *Polens Malkunst* issued in 1915 in Vienna  
→ see p. 148

works by other Poles, such as Władysław Dunin or Władysław Skoczylas. Stefan Filipkiewicz, Stanisław Kamocki and Władysław Jarocki had shown the greatest number of works. The painting by the latter artist, titled the *Village Church in the Carpathians*, had been photographed during the Viennese exhibition, and a copy of the photograph was preserved in the collection of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek (reference number 124934 E). Jarocki also presented the *Self-Portrait*, which shows him wearing skis (1909, National Museum in Wrocław). A total of twenty-nine oil paintings and drawings were presented, and the exhibition was available for viewing for a relatively long time – from March until July 1912. The Vienna Secession closed that year with a monographic exhibition of two artists – Rudolf von Alt and his father Jacob.

The year 1913 brought three new exhibitions, ranging from the forty-third, opened in January, to the next one, lasting from March to July, and ending with the last one, in November. Polish artists graced all the above-mentioned exhibitions with their presence, and a variety of their works was presented. Having said that, the number of works by Polish artists on display never exceeded fifteen. The themes of these works oscillated mainly around folk motifs. Kamocki and Filipkiewicz exhibited Tatra mountain-themed compositions from Zakopane and Poronin, and Jarocki displayed his paintings that were strongly inspired by the Hutsul folklore, such as the *Hutsuls in the Carpathians* from 1910 (National Museum in Warsaw). In addition to several members of the Secession, the group of the exhibitors also included less known painters, such as Stanisław Gałek, Mieczysław Jakimowicz, and Witold Rzegociński.

Another special initiative of the group was organizing the exhibition of works by artists of the young generation – “Junge Künstler Österreichs”, inaugurated in January 1914. On that occasion, three Polish artists exhibited a total of eight works, mostly portraits. The artists were Maria Melania Mutermilch, known as Mela Muter, and Leopold Gottlieb, both associated with the Parisian milieu, accompanied also by the Kraków-based painter Mieczysław Trzciński. The next, forty-seventh exhibition, which lasted from March to July 1914, was again conceived as a review. At that time, few paintings – only nine – by Polish members of the Secession were on display: works by Władysław Jarocki, Stanisław Kamocki and Vlastimil Hofmann, mainly canvases with folk themes set in a mountain landscape.

The outbreak of World War I on July 28, 1914 abruptly broke the continuity of the Vienna Secession exhibitions. The next, forty-eighth exhibition took place only in September 1917, and lasted until November of that year. It featured nineteen works by Jarocki, who mainly presented landscapes from the vicinity of Poronin. Filipkiewicz showed numerous paintings of landscapes and still lifes, and Hofmann, among others, his *Self-Portrait*, where he painted himself in the company of a woman and a skeleton dressed in a military uniform, which perfectly reflected the mood of the war years. In the archives of the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek there is a photo of Jarocki's water-colour *The Piper* (reference number 427.951-B), perhaps taken during the setting up of the exhibition, or after its opening.

Without doubt, at that time, the most important event from the Polish perspective was the publication of a book by Berta Zuckermandl. Titled *Polens Malkunst* and issued in 1915, this was a collection of articles previously published in the weekly “Polen” magazine, which was issued by the members of the Polish Legions (see: Fig. 23). Anna Baranowa considered this work in conjunction with the exhibition of Polish

art organized in the Künstlerhaus, which was in progress at the time of the book's publication.<sup>48</sup> Zuckerkandl formulated a very thorough review of the work by Polish artists, with particular emphasis on painting, which was already emphasized in the title of the publication. Its pages contain many references to history, culture, literature, as well as political issues, which constituted an integral part of the history of Polish art and significantly impacted its development. As Baranowa pointed out, it is precisely these references, which support the assertion that the critic travelled to Kraków in person, and learned about the art she was studying.<sup>49</sup> Incidentally, Zuckerkandl made a bold comparison already on the first pages of her book, describing Kraków as the "Florence of the East".<sup>50</sup>

The next show of the Artists' Union took place only in March 1918. This time, however, no Polish works were included. Only at the fiftieth, anniversary exhibition, opened in April 1918, three paintings by Vlastimil Hofmann were shown. In the case of the fifty-first exhibition, the catalogue is missing again, leading us to question whether it actually took place. The fifty-second exhibition of the Artists' Union was the first show of the Vienna Secession organized after World War I, and at the same time the last one attended by Poles as members of the grouping. The presentation, which lasted from December 1918 to January 1919, featured only one work by a single Polish artist – a painting by Hofmann.

Beginning with the catalogue of the fifty-third Secession exhibition, only a list of ordinary members of the Union was in use, and those were almost exclusively Viennese. This was a direct result of the geographic and political changes that took place after World War I, particularly the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The effect of statutory changes announced at the end of 1918 was the regulation of issues related to the structure of the Artists' Union – the status of a member of the Secession could now be obtained only by artists living in Austria.<sup>51</sup> As noted by Dorota Kudelska, from that moment on, Polish artists showcased their pieces at Secession exhibitions extremely rarely, always as guests, whereas their works were more often presented at the Hagenbund exhibition, which was subject to less stringent membership restrictions.<sup>52</sup>

Due to the sporadic presence of works by Polish artists at the exhibitions of the Artists' Union after 1918, only the ninety-eighth exhibition, lasting from February 18 to April 9, 1928, deserves special attention from the perspective of the issues discussed in the present paper. It was the first and only show entirely devoted to Polish art, as evidenced by the title of "Polish Kunst". Although attempts to organize such an exhibition were made before World War I, it was not possible to complete the project – not until the times of the Second Polish Republic. The exhibition presented the works of former members of the Secession, those who displayed their works at the shows of the Artists' Union in the years 1898–1919, as well as completely new artists. The latter group included those who, in the period discussed above in detail, had not yet presented their works at exhibitions or only did so occasionally. During the aforementioned show, they displayed pieces that were stylistically

48 A. Baranowa, *Krytycy wiedeńscy o "Sztuce"* – Ludwig Hevesi, Hermann Bahr, Berta Zuckerkandl, in: *Stulecie Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich "Sztuka"*, eadem (ed.), Kraków 2001, p. 75.

49 Ibidem, p. 74.

50 B. Zuckerkandl, *Polens Malkunst*, Wien 1915, p. 3.

51 D. Kudelska, *Wiedeńskie kontakty "Sztuki"*, p. 137.

52 Ibidem.

different compared to the Young Poland [*Młoda Polska*, or Polish modernism] closer to the art of the avant-garde and Art Deco. These artists included Xawery Dunikowski and Jan Szczepkowski, who previously exhibited, as well as Zofia Stryjeńska, Edward Wittig, Eugeniusz Zak, August Zamoyski and Felicjan Szczęsny Kowarski. In total, fifty painters and sculptors from Poland exhibited their works. An important part of the exhibition was the presentation of the products from three different weaving workshops, dealing with the production of *kilim* tapestries. The works of eleven artists collaborating with the “Ład” cooperative of Warsaw and “Kilim” cooperative of Kraków, as well as the “Warsztaty Kilimiarskie” [weaving workshops] of Zakopane were on display.

### **Closing remarks – Polish artists and their place in the milieu of the Vienna Secession**

An analysis of the exhibitions of the Vienna Secession Artists' Union in 1898–1919, and the works of Polish art presented as part of these shows, brings us to one fundamental conclusion. Poles were undeniably part of the Viennese exhibition milieu at the time. The high artistic level of their works frequently met with appreciation of the local critics. Oftentimes, though, Polish artists were marginalized within the Secession circles, which typically resulted from political and economic issues. When addressing the subject of Polish artists showcasing their works during the Union's exhibitions, we should first consider the artists from the Kraków-based Society of Polish Artists “Sztuka”, whose works were most frequently presented. Thanks to their contemporaneous form, the works of the Poles were a perfect fit, falling within the European Modern art trend at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their iconography and symbolism, on the other hand, constituted an expression of “Polishness” and were deeply rooted in tradition. Critics writing about Polish art repeatedly emphasized that “spirit of the nation”. The aspect of rediscovering the folk culture within, and finding values that had been lost in urban milieus, had been emphasized, in retrospect, by Elizabeth Clegg.<sup>53</sup> She was also of an opinion that Poles combined national elements in their works – clearly identifying their oeuvre – with universal motifs, typical of international European art.<sup>54</sup> This specific dualism of Polish art determined the successes achieved by Polish artists in the multicultural arena of Vienna. On the one hand, the Viennese public was faced with an extreme manifestation of Polish spirit, and on the other hand, they could admire the oeuvre perfectly aligned with the modernist trends that prevailed on the Old Continent at that time. Symbolism, Art Nouveau, Impressionism, and Expressionism were mixed in the works of Polish artists with vestiges of realism. Through art, Poles brought foreign audiences closer to their officially non-existent country. Their participation in the Wiener Secession exhibitions and their presence on the international art scene fit into a much broader political and artistic context. On the one hand, this was the opportunity to present their own artistic achievements, and on the other, it epitomized the striving to collectively manifest ethnic distinctiveness during the partitions, when Poland did not feature on the maps of Europe as an independent state. The above-mentioned artists emphasized in

53 E. Clegg, *Art, Design & Architecture in Central Europe 1890–1920*, New Heaven–London 2006, p. 102.

54 Ibidem.



their work the beauty of the natural landscape, and the cultural distinctiveness of the Polish people, whom they portrayed against the background of nature and in relationship thereto. In their works, they repeatedly addressed political themes, while referring to the complicated history of the country. At the same time, they directly related to the decadent moods prevailing in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, smoothly combining this approach with the implementation of the premises of modernist art. ●