

NATIONALISM IN AN INTERNATIONAL MOVEMENT: POLISH ART  
NOUVEAU, 1890-1910

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## Abstract

HANNAH MARCHMAN: Nationalism in an International Movement: Polish Art  
Nouveau, 1890-1910

(Under the direction of Ewa Wampuszyc)

While the Art Nouveau movement in Europe has been extensively studied, Polish art has been largely left out of the discussion. However, this absence should not be considered as proof that Polish artists did not create art works in the Art Nouveau style. In fact, Art Nouveau was prevalent in Poland, but unlike the movement in Europe, Polish Art Nouveau tended to have political undertones. This thesis examines how Polish artists adapted the wider Art Nouveau movement to Polish culture, and assisted the political agenda that Polish art had been charged with in the aftermath of the eighteenth century partitions. Furthermore, this thesis describes the wider Polish Art Nouveau movement and looks at the underlying meanings of paintings, stained glass window designs, posters, and postcards from 1890 to 1910.

This thesis is dedicated to my wonderful husband Patrick. His support, encouragement, and unconditional love kept me going.

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## Introduction

Stanisław Wyspiański's stained glass window design *Polonia*<sup>1</sup> is full of bold, dark, rich colors (see Figure I). The main figure, a female representation of Poland, is lying back in the arms of a group of people—pale, lifeless, descending into a pit of “fire.” *Polonia* is almost the exact opposite of Gustav Klimt's *The Kiss*, which depicts two lovers in an embrace, wrapped in a golden robe near blooming flowers. Despite the differences between Wyspiański's and Klimt's paintings, they are both part of the same artistic movement: Art Nouveau. An artistic trend that captivated audiences throughout Europe near the turn of the twentieth century, Art Nouveau is still quite popular today. Yet while the broad Art Nouveau movement has been extensively studied, the Polish movement is relatively ignored by scholars, especially English speaking ones. Despite the lack of scholarly information about it, Art Nouveau was an important movement in Polish history, and offers numerous insights into the Polish mindset at the time.

What are the characteristics of Polish Art Nouveau? How is it different from the wider movement, and why did these differences develop? In the course of this paper I will answer these questions by looking at examples of Polish Art Nouveau paintings, posters, postcards, and stained glass window designs. By examining a selection of Polish Art Nouveau artworks, I show that Polish artists specifically changed the wider Art Nouveau movement to fit Polish culture, and to assist with the political agenda with

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<sup>1</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Polonia*, 1892-1894, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 400.



which Polish art had been charged. Furthermore, I explain this political agenda and the reasons why Polish Art Nouveau differs from the broader movement by addressing Polish Art Nouveau in its historical context. Lastly, I discuss the reception of Art Nouveau in the Polish partitions, and the responses from critics, both for and against, modern art.

Art Nouveau was only one aspect of the modern art movement in Poland, and in order to better understand Polish Art Nouveau it is important to recognize the broader European art movement, as well as other contemporaneous Polish art movements. The period associated with Polish modern art is also the same time that Art Nouveau was a prominent style in Europe and North America. By definition, Art Nouveau was the first deliberate, internationally based attempt to modernize visual culture, and a rejection of all previous traditions. Known by many different names, “Art Nouveau” is the French term, and is also widely used in English speaking countries as well as others. “*Sezessionsstil*” and “*Sezesion*” were the terms used in Austria, whereas the Russians used the terms “*Modyerna*” and “*Novyi Stil.*” The German terms were “*Die Moderne*,” “*Der Moderne Stil*,” as well as “*Jugendstil.*” The technical Polish term for Art Nouveau is “*Secesja*” (after the Austrian term), which translates most directly into “Secession.”<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, the terminology seems straightforward enough, and the Polish term *Secesja* or Secession is typically used when referencing Polish Art Nouveau in Polish academic circles. However, for scholars writing in English, the term *Secesja* poses several problems. First *Secesja* suggests Austrian roots, but the movement in Poland was far more influenced by French and British Art Nouveau. Also, for American audiences the translation of “Secession” is very misleading, as it is most often associated with the

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<sup>2</sup> Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau*, translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: 1999), 7.

American Civil War, and therefore the term holds political connotations for an American audience, which are absent to a Polish audience.

A second Polish term that is associated with Art Nouveau is “*Młoda Polska*” (Young Poland),<sup>3</sup> but this term has several issues as well. First, *Młoda Polska* refers to all Polish modern art, not just the Art Nouveau style, and it is associated with the neo-Romantic vein of art during this time period. Furthermore, *Młoda Polska* does not lend itself well when discussing decorative arts, as terms such as “*Młoda Polska* painting,” or similar phrases, are not used in Polish.<sup>4</sup> Therefore throughout this paper, I will use the term Art Nouveau instead of *Secesja* or *Młoda Polska*, to avoid the above issues. Additionally, because Polish Art Nouveau was most influenced by British and French art, the term Art Nouveau evokes a more accurate meaning in English of the Polish art movement.

While many artists before 1890 had anticipated modernizing art, the true beginning of Art Nouveau came in London in March of 1893 when the first issue of *The Studio*, a new artistic journal, featured the work of Aubrey Beardsley. Beardsley’s illustration *J’ai baisé ta bouche Jokanaan* for Oscar Wilde’s play *Salome*, is accepted as the first mature image in the Art Nouveau style.<sup>5</sup> Beardsley’s sinuous lines and curves, as well as the stylized flower that was part of the image were all aspects that eventually became synonymous with Art Nouveau. That same year, Art Nouveau appeared for the

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<sup>3</sup> The *Młoda Polska* movement was a loose association of Modernists, including those who used Art Nouveau stylizations. Since *Młoda Polska* is such a broad term it will not be used in this paper to describe Polish Art Nouveau. For more information on *Młoda Polska* see Jan Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> For a more thorough explanation of all the associated terms, see Magdalena Czubińska “The Krakow Art Nouveau Poster,” *Zbornik (Muzej Primenjene Umetnosti)* 4/5 (2008/2009): 59.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *The Essence of Art Nouveau* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 2000), 8-10.

first time in architecture and interior design in Brussels; however, it was not until 1895, when a French businessman, Siegfried Bing, opened a new gallery in Paris, “*L’Art Nouveau*,” that the movement got an official name. From then on, Paris was one of the most active centers of Art Nouveau, and would become synonymous with the style itself. However, the movement spread quickly, and by late 1895 Art Nouveau had spread across Europe, and by 1900 the movement was widely practiced and discussed internationally.<sup>6</sup>

While each artistic center across Europe interpreted Art Nouveau differently, there were a few unifying factors. First, one of the most pivotal sources of inspiration for almost all Art Nouveau works was nature; plants, animals, and landscapes are present in examples of the Art Nouveau style throughout the world. Furthermore, linearity and the use of the female form—usually in a highly stylized manner—were also important aspects of Art Nouveau. The formal evocation of motion was also frequently present, as was the simplification of forms for the sake of a “more organic” art.<sup>7</sup> Despite the fact that this movement was meant to break with the past, other artistic movements were still present in works that today are considered Art Nouveau. For example, French Symbolism was especially influential on Art Nouveau artists who used it to add a sense of mystery to their images. Additionally, many European artists were also influenced by Japanese and Islamic arts, as well as folk art from their own countries.<sup>8</sup> The most universal aspect of

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 8-16.

<sup>7</sup> Jeremy Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe* (Manchester, New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>8</sup> Folk art was an important part of the Art Nouveau movement, and other Modern art styles, throughout Europe. Artists, viewed folk art as a “purer” art that was untainted by modernity, therefore folk motifs were often used to express artists’ desires to return to a simpler time. Folk art also represented a form of “outsider art” that was not previously used in high art, and therefore European artists incorporated these motifs as a way of breaking with “traditional” art. For more information see Paul Greenhalgh, *The Essence of Art Nouveau* (New York: Harry N. Abrams Inc. Publishers, 2000), 47-55.

Art Nouveau was the idea of “art for art’s sake,” as almost every Art Nouveau center used the style to make beautiful everyday items that were devoid of a deeper meaning. Of course all these “standards” of Art Nouveau were adapted differently, especially in the Polish case, but all variations of Art Nouveau were a “modern style.”

The turn of the twentieth century was a tumultuous period for Europe, and the world in general. Modern advances made life simultaneously easier and more difficult, and people were re-examining their role in the new world. On the one hand, in many European cities urbanites were industrializing and making new scientific discoveries, dispelling the Gothic notion that the world was “fantastic” and “unknowable.” On the other hand there was a reaction against empirical knowledge, and a desire for returning to a “simpler time.” The conflicting worldviews at the turn of the century led to many of the contradictions in Art Nouveau, as some Art Nouveau was focused on modernization, depicting new almost abstract forms, while other artworks were highlighting folk motifs and nature, relating to a simpler time. Inconsistencies such as these are one of the reasons that Art Nouveau is a difficult artistic movement to study, since there were conflicting worldviews throughout Europe.<sup>9</sup> These tensions were most clearly depicted in Art Nouveau through the formal evocation of motion, and through the creation of grotesque forms, which were not representative of any particular organisms.<sup>10</sup> By painting scenes full of swirling lines of motion, bordering on confusion, Art Nouveau artists were sometimes expressing the rapidly shifting society that resulted from urbanization and industrialization. Of course these feelings varied from country to country, as cities were changing at different paces depending on their location, and each center of Art Nouveau

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3-4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 5.

was influenced by the external factors of the area, which is why the artworks of this style were highly dependent on where they were created.

In the Polish case, the modern art movement had many different components. Polish Art Nouveau combined numerous international art styles, as well as the political and social atmosphere, creating a movement which was vastly different from the wider Art Nouveau movement. To better understand Polish Art Nouveau, it is important to look at other artistic movements, as well as the political and social aspects that influenced it. At the same time that Art Nouveau began to appear in the Polish partitions, several other modern, international trends were also introduced, including Impressionism and Symbolism. Polish Modernists were trying to be innovative, so they often worked with several different artistic stylizations, which meant that Polish Art Nouveau also had aspects of other styles, especially Symbolism. Polish Art Nouveau was also particularly influenced by the political situation in Poland at the time. By this time Poland had not been a unified country for about ninety-five years, as it had been partitioned by Prussia, Russia, and Austria, which left Polish artists dealing with the issues surrounding re-unification. This political undertone that is present in many Polish Art Nouveau works is one of the main reasons that Polish Art Nouveau differs from the wider movement.

While the political situation of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changed Polish art, it also makes Polish Art Nouveau a very difficult topic to study. Since there was no Polish state at the time, artists were classified according to what partition they lived in. Therefore it is very difficult to assess the presence of Polish identity in Polish Art Nouveau given that the definition of “Polish” was in flux throughout the nineteenth century. Due to the partitioning of Poland, people could no longer be classified as “Poles”

based on where they lived. Pre-partition Poland had been the home to many diverse groups of people including Ukrainians, Lithuanians, and Jews,<sup>11</sup> but after the partitions these people were not necessarily “Poles” anymore. Furthermore, during the partitions there were many Poles who emigrated and lived elsewhere to avoid persecution, but they still considered themselves to be Polish even though they no longer lived in the former boundaries of Poland. As these cases show, the question of what defines a Pole during the partition period is a complex topic, and one that is out of the scope of this paper. Thus, for the purposes of this paper I have chosen to analyze only artists who classified themselves as “Polish.”

The issue of Polish identity is only one of the many convoluted aspects of studying Polish Art Nouveau, and it is one of the reasons why Polish Art Nouveau has been relatively ignored by scholars outside of Poland. While there are many helpful works on Polish Art Nouveau in Polish, such as the dated but still very informative *Secesja* by Mieczysław Wallis,<sup>12</sup> English speakers have a very limited selection of sources on this topic. Furthermore, in order to study Polish Art Nouveau one must take an interdisciplinary approach and look at both historical facts and artistic interpretations. For the historical background and the general Polish perspective, I relied on Norman Davies’

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<sup>11</sup> The question of Jewish identity in Poland is a particularly convoluted and sensitive topic. I do not have the necessary room required to fully address the “Jewish question,” therefore I have purposely left out any Art Nouveau artworks that have Jewish political undertones. One example that I find very interesting but cannot adequately explain is E.M. Lilien’s *Aus “Juda.”* This image, which uses Art Nouveau stylizations, may suggest a political message of Poland as a home for Jews. For more information on this work, see M. Hirschfelder, “E.M.Lilien,” *Ost und West* (Berlin) 7, (1901): 517-522, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://sammlungen.ub.uni-frankfurt.de/cm/periodical/pageview/2609129>.

<sup>12</sup> Mieczysław Wallis, *Secesja* (Warszawa: Arkady, 1967).

works *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*,<sup>13</sup> and *God's Playground: A History of Poland in Two Volumes*.<sup>14</sup> Both of these sources were especially insightful into the Polish mindset as Davies clearly explains important events and movements in Polish history, and then explains how Poles felt and reacted.

For the information about art history there were two main types of sources that I used, those that discussed Art Nouveau but left out the Polish movement, and those that did include information about Poland. The most critically acclaimed and extensive books on Art Nouveau in English generally leave out Poland altogether. Two most recent examples are Norbert Wolf's *Art Nouveau*<sup>15</sup> and Paul Greenhalgh's *Art Nouveau: 1890-1914*.<sup>16</sup> Both works take extensive looks at the Art Nouveau movement across Europe, including Great Britain, France, Belgium, and Spain, among others, complete with hundreds of images, but neither work discusses the Polish take on the movement. Even English works that do mention Polish Art Nouveau only dedicate a section, or at best a chapter to the diverse and interesting movement that developed in the Polish partitions. One notable example is Jeremy Howard's *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*,<sup>17</sup> which devotes an entire chapter to the Polish movement, and is one of the first to do so in English. By far the most significant English source on the subject is

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<sup>13</sup> Norman Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>14</sup> Norman Davies *God's Playground: a History of Poland in Two Volumes: Volume II 1795 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Norbert Wolf, *Art Nouveau* (Munich, London, New York: Prestel, 2011).

<sup>16</sup> Paul Greenhalgh, *Art Nouveau, 1890-1914* (London: Victoria and Albert Museum; Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*.

*Polish Art Nouveau* by Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska.<sup>18</sup> Originally written in Polish, *Polish Art Nouveau* includes a discussion about the major artists, architects, and designers of the period, as well as the writers, critics, and patrons who supported them. Furthermore the work includes nearly six hundred illustrations, albeit with little discussion of the particular works. But all things considered, *Polish Art Nouveau* is an invaluable source for English scholars. Another notable source is Jan Cavanaugh's *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*,<sup>19</sup> which is the first English monograph to look exclusively at Polish modern art. Cavanaugh explores the Polish Art Nouveau movement as it relates to the political atmosphere of a partitioned Poland.<sup>20</sup>

There are of course a number of helpful English articles about Polish modern art, but almost none of them deal solely with Polish Art Nouveau, and if they do, the author chooses to analyze a particular aspect, such as poster art or landscapes. The goal of this paper is to fill this gap, by offering an explanation of the Polish Art Nouveau movement, and how it differed from the European movement in paintings, stained glass window designs, posters, and advertisements.

Despite the lack of English scholarly sources on the subject, Art Nouveau had a real presence in the modern art movement in Poland. Furthermore, it is an important movement because it expounds on the mindset of Polish artists at the time, artists who were struggling with branching out to become European, while maintaining their Polish identity, which had been suppressed during the partition period.

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<sup>18</sup> Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau*.

<sup>19</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*.

<sup>20</sup> David Crowley, review of *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, by Jan Cavanaugh, *Slavic Review*, Spring 2002, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2696995>.



## **Background Information and the Development of Polish Art**

Polish artists at the turn of the twentieth century attempted to use modern trends while keeping their Polish identity alive, and assisting Polish independence. The political agenda of independence was an important part of Polish art because of past events and their lasting effects, especially those from the late eighteenth century. By the time Poland experienced its own “Golden Age” beginning in 1569 with the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Poles already had a strong connection with Western Europe through Catholicism after Mieszko I, Duke of Poland, converted to Christianity.<sup>21</sup> This connection remained a pivotal unifying factor for most Poles, particularly after the partitions, as well as an important theme in Polish art, including during the Art Nouveau period. However, the political developments of the eighteenth century would have the greatest effect on Polish Art Nouveau. The partitions of Poland by Russia, Prussia, and Austria in 1773, 1793, and 1795 slowly erased Poland from the map leaving a nation of people embittered after losing their independence. The first partition took place in 1773, when Poland lost thirty percent of its territory, and although it still remained a large European state, Poland had lost much of its power. Then in 1793, Russia and Prussia took still more Polish territory; in response, Tadeusz Kościuszko, a member of the nobility, led an uprising in 1794 which regained some Polish territory, although not for long. By 1795 Poland was completely divided between Prussia, Russia, and Austria in the third

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<sup>21</sup> Jerzy Lukowski and Hubert Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 3-83.

partition.<sup>22</sup> This early rebellion, as well as later ones, were often evoked in artwork and nationalistic propaganda, and were a symbol of the discontent of the Polish people.

The Poles did not willingly become part of another empire; in fact they rebelled several times, with three most notable examples in 1830-31, 1846-48, and 1863-64. While valiant efforts, each uprising ended with more repercussions for Poles. In many cases Poles were sent to Siberia, or fled in exile, and in almost all cases the insurrections resulted in harsher treatments of Poles. There are many reasons why the uprisings were unsuccessful, with the main one being the fragmentation of Polish society. In nineteenth century Polish society, there were three main groups, the nobility, the gentry, and the peasantry, and these groups were often at odds with each other, which contributed greatly to the failure of the uprisings. Partially as punishment after the insurrections, Russification and Germanization policies were increased as Russia and Prussia attempted to subdue the Poles by taking away their Polish identity. A pivotal part of these policies were in the area of education and language, and the Polish language alternately limited, or banned completely.<sup>23</sup> For example, in 1872 compulsory German language schooling was introduced in Prussian Poland. Then in 1873 Otto von Bismarck's policy of "Kulturkampf" was extended to include Prussian Poland, which put restrictions on Catholics and the Catholic Church.<sup>24</sup> In the Russian partition, the Polish language was

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 133-181.

<sup>23</sup> Besides just banning the Polish language from official use, the policies of Russification and Germanization greatly varied over time. At the lesser stages, Russification and Germanization consisted of the preferential treatment of Russians and Germans over the Poles; the most intense stages of these processes saw the Russification and Germanization of practically all aspects of public life, including education, justice, and transportation. For more specifics, see Piotr Paweł Gach, "The Defense of Primordial Values," in *Values in the Polish Cultural Tradition: Polish Philosophical Studies, III*, edited by Leon Dyczewski (Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002), 137-170.

<sup>24</sup> Lukowski and Zawadzki, *A Concise History of Poland*, 182-186.

similarly banned from official use, and children were only taught in Russian in schools after the 1863 uprising.<sup>25</sup> The Austrian section of Poland, called Galicia, was the most liberal partition and was even awarded some regional autonomy by the 1870s, although the use of Polish was also banned there periodically until 1848. Despite these measures designed to curtail Polish nationalism by oppressing the Poles, nationalistic feelings continued to grow in Poland and were often expressed through literature and art.

Throughout the period of the partitions, Poles worked hard to keep their culture alive, despite the efforts of the Hapsburg, Prussian and Russian Empires to limit or even eliminate Polish culture in an attempt to curb Polish national identity. For example, in all three partitions at varying times, Polish publications were heavily censored, and most Polish universities were closed or reorganized as Russian or German ones. These restrictions were met with opposition from the Polish intelligentsia, who attempted to preserve their cultural heritage, while also demonstrating that Poland—because of its distinct culture and history—was worth reconstituting as a state.

After the failures of open insurrection, Poles turned to the arts as a way of discussing politics and of keeping Polish traditions alive. Art was continually used “in service” to Poland for most of the nineteenth century, even though many artists were forced to emigrate due to their politically subversive ideas. Among these émigrés were artists of the 1830s who represented Polish Romanticism, including the most famous

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<sup>25</sup> Davies, *God's Playground: a History of Poland in Two Volumes: Volume II 1795 to the Present*, 73-74.

writer Adam Mickiewicz.<sup>26</sup> However, Polish artists, even those abroad, continued to add political undertones to their works in an effort to assist Polish independence.

Patrons of the arts also assisted Polish independence by supporting the art that kept Polish traditions while discussed politics. Before the partitions, the main patrons of the arts were the Polish kings who supported both European and Polish artists. However, after 1795, the artistic centers that developed around the Polish king ceased to exist, and there was no longer support for the arts from the ruling government. Instead, private individuals became the main source of support for artists, and members of the aristocracy began creating museums at their palaces. One important example is Princess Izabela Czartoryska's Temple of Sibyl which she created with her husband Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski at their country estate in Puławy in 1801.<sup>27</sup> The first public museum in Poland, the Temple of Sibyl was created to preserve Polish culture, and was filled with historical objects as well as artworks. Czartoryska would branch out and create another museum in 1809 that would showcase her collection of memorabilia connected with European greats like Shakespeare. Although the Czartoryski family would move their possessions to Paris after the 1830 insurrection, they would return the museum to Kraków in 1876. The Czartoryski family would continue to support artists during their stay in Paris, as well as after their return to Poland. In fact one of the greatest Polish painters, Jan

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<sup>26</sup> Adam Mickiewicz was a Polish national poet, and is considered by many as the greatest Polish poet of all time. A prime representative of the Polish Romantic period, he was also involved in the struggle for Polish independence. For more information on Mickiewicz see Czesław Miłosz, "Romanticism" in *The History of Polish Literature*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 208-232. For more information on Polish Romanticism, see Davies, *Heart of Europe: A Short History of Poland*, 73-74.

<sup>27</sup> Laurie Winters, *Leonardo Da Vinci and the Splendor of Poland : a History of Collecting and Patronage* (Milwaukee, Wis.: Distributed by Yale University Press, 2002), 124-126.

Matejko, would be supported by the Czartoryski family.<sup>28</sup> The Czartoryski family exemplifies patronage for Polish art during the partition period. The majority of patrons were aristocrats, usually ones who emigrated after uprisings, and while they did support Polish art, the majority of their collections were European artists. However, these aristocrats were the main source of support for Polish artists, which explains why Polish art was filled with patriotic images.

At the beginning of the partitions, the leading visual art trend was Neoclassicism, which dominated the art schools and exhibitions until the 1820s. The Neoclassic formula, of bold contrast between light and dark, and sharpness in color, was well-suited to the conception of art as a tool of patriotism. The combination of the Neoclassical style with nostalgic settings which recalled glorious moments in Polish history, stirred the patriotic feelings of viewers and encouraged people to resist assimilation with the partitioning powers. These Neoclassic, patriotic works became very popular and took over the Polish art scene; the patriotic themes present in the Neoclassic style would continue to be popular, even as Romanticism became the dominant artistic style.<sup>29</sup>

Over time, the patriotic themes of Neoclassicism evolved into Romantic artworks which glorified insurrectionaries as Polish heroes, in order to disseminate the idea of rebellion. Romanticism was the most dominant art movement in nineteenth century Poland, with the height of the style from about 1820 to 1850, and Romantic elements were still present in visual arts into the early twentieth century. A reaction against the Enlightenment theory of art as the imitation of nature, the art of Polish Romantics was

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 131-135.

<sup>29</sup> Maria Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań* (Raleigh: North Carolina Museum of Art, 1993), 4-6.

overtly emotional, often featuring images of fantasy, folklore, and rural life. By the 1840s, almost all art and literature critics believed in the concept of art as the embodiment of abstract feelings and ideas, rather than the imitation of nature.<sup>30</sup> This art also propagated the idea of the desire for a free Poland, which is evident by the artistic glorification of such uprisings as the November Uprising. One example is Wojciech Kossak's *November Night (Noc listopadowa)*,<sup>31</sup> which shows Polish insurgents heroically fighting the Russian army in Warsaw's Łazienki Park near a statue of John III Sobieski.

Despite the emphasis in Polish history on the uprisings of the nineteenth century, the number of Poles involved in the insurrections was relatively small. However, just because not all Poles participated in active rebellion does not mean that they forgot their desire for Polish independence. As the art of the period shows, there was a strong desire among artists and their supporters to regain Polish independence. The insurrectionary tradition was also rooted in the old Commonwealth, when Poles had the right to rebel against any king who violated their freedoms, so Poles felt completely vindicated in the insurrections of the nineteenth century. Furthermore, the idea of serving one's country grew to become a universal moral duty, and the fight for Poland was viewed as a righteous fight for good.<sup>32</sup> After the uprisings in 1830-31, and 1846-48, Poles kept the memory of the fight alive, despite the defeats they suffered. Rather than viewing the end of the uprisings as a defeat, it was viewed as an example of heroism and temporary

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<sup>30</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 15.

<sup>31</sup> Wojciech Kossak, *Noc listopadowa*, 1898, private owners, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Kossak\\_W/Images/Noc\\_listopadowa.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Kossak_W/Images/Noc_listopadowa.jpg) (accessed October 20, 2012).

<sup>32</sup> Tomasz Strzembosz, "Readiness for Sacrifice and the Sense of Service," in *Values in the Polish Cultural Tradition: Polish Philosophical Studies, III*, edited by Leon Dyczewski, 171-182 (Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002), 171.

liberty. Although the insurrectionaries had been defeated, and many killed or exiled, they were still glorified and seen as heroes because they had fought. The insurrectionaries were often remembered and glorified in the poetry of Poland.<sup>33</sup> This speaks to the high value placed upon literature, and to a lesser extent art in general, in Poland. Literature was important to Poles, especially during the partition period, because the poets had assumed the role of spiritual leader, and the Poles generally appreciated that because of their need for hope.<sup>34</sup> Even during times of oppression when many Polish texts were banned, Poles continued to read the works of the exiled Romantics.

In the first part of the nineteenth century the exiled Romantic poets and authors controlled the majority of Polish art, but by 1860 this shifted and the visual arts took over as the most influential and prolific. By 1850 the most famous Polish writers, including Mickiewicz, were dead, and this would mark the shift in Polish culture from literature to painting. However, the Romantic style and tradition of glorifying insurrectionaries in literature would evolve to become part of the first artistic style in the newly developed Polish visual arts.

While the early Polish visual artists were not critically acclaimed in Europe, they did play a role in European art. Most Polish artists of the first half of the nineteenth century were relatively insignificant to the European Romantic movement in terms of artistic talent and ingenuity, but their significance and contribution to European Romanticism rested in their iconography. The paintings of the early nineteenth century gave visual form to Poland's political struggle as a nation partitioned and oppressed by

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<sup>33</sup> Davies, *God's Playground: a History of Poland in Two Volumes: Volume II 1795 to the Present*, 31-32.

<sup>34</sup> Alina Kowalczykova, "The Heritage of Romanticism and Tradition," in *Values in the Polish Cultural Tradition: Polish Philosophical Studies, III*, edited by Leon Dyczewski (Washington, D.C: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2002) 183-198.

the Austro-Hungarian, Prussian, and Russian empires. As some of the first artists to visually depict the struggle “between an oppressed nation and its oppressors,” Polish artists created a theme in art that would be repeated throughout the world as other countries depicted their struggles with oppressive rulers.<sup>35</sup> While some archetypes were adopted by European artists, most became associated solely with Polish art. For example, the Polish iconographic type of the “defeated hero” was widely used in Polish art but not elsewhere.<sup>36</sup> Rooted in the unsuccessful uprisings of the nineteenth century, the use of defeated heroes in art is a clear continuation of the glorification of revolutionaries, even those who were unsuccessful. One particularly well-known example is a painting by Jan Matejko, one of the earliest renowned Polish painters. His 1866 painting *Rejtan- The Fall of Poland (Rejtan - Upadek Polski)*<sup>37</sup> shows a Polish hero, Tadeusz Rejtan,<sup>38</sup> trying to stop the first partition of Poland. Although Rejtan was unsuccessful, he was praised for his revolutionary attempt, and was subsequently celebrated by numerous Polish artists. Images of defeated heroes were widely used in Polish art, and were a part of Polish iconography that was created by Polish artists to showcase Polish values. Many of the pictorial representations used by Polish Romantics would continue to be present in Polish Modern art, including Art Nouveau.

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<sup>35</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 17-18.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Jan Matejko, *Rejtan - Upadek Polski*, 1866, Zamek Królewski w Warszawie, Warsaw, <http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Matejko/Images/Rejtan.jpg> (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>38</sup> Tadeusz Rejtan was a Polish nobleman who tried to stop the legalization of the partitioning of Poland in 1773 at the meeting of the Sejm, despite threats from foreign ambassadors. Rejtan was later praised in literature and paintings. For more information on Rejtan, see Davies, *God's Playground: a History of Poland in Two Volumes: Volume II 1795 to the Present*, 18.



Romantic Polish iconography featured numerous images that expressed hope and liberty, such as horses, which were seen as symbols of passion, vitality, and freedom. Hunting was also a popular image as it was seen as preparation for future battles, and Polish landscapes were used to express hope that there would one day be a free Poland.<sup>39</sup> Many of these image types were used in later art movements, including the modern movements of Art Nouveau, Symbolism, and the like.

The most prevalent example of Polish iconography is that of allegorical figures of Poland being crucified, much like Christ. Using allegorical Christian images to connect Poland with Christ is a direct link to the idea of “Messianism,” which was most widely propagated by the Romantic poet Adam Mickiewicz. Mickiewicz wrote that Poland had been crucified by the partitioning powers of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, and that like Christ, Poland would also be resurrected. Furthermore, once Poland was resurrected, freedom would be restored to Europe. Mickiewicz disseminated his views in numerous works including *Forefathers’ Eve (Dziady)* and *The Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage (Księgi Narodu Polskiego i Pielgrzymstwa Polskiego)*. While *Forefathers’ Eve* explains “Messianism” in dramatic form, through the vision of a priest named Peter,<sup>40</sup> it is in *The Books of the Polish Nation and Polish Pilgrimage* that Mickiewicz is most blatant about his idea. Mickiewicz directly states that the Polish nation was crucified by the “Satanic Trinity” of Russia, Prussia, and Austria, but that Poland was not dead, and indeed would rise again to bring an end to the enslavement of

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<sup>39</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> For more information on *Forefathers’ Eve* and the ways Mickiewicz discusses “Messianism” in the play, see Roman Robert Koropeczyk, *Adam Mickiewicz : the Life of a Romantic* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 114-115.

Europe.<sup>41</sup> Mickiewicz's "Messianism" would be repeatedly referenced in Polish art, including in Art Nouveau works.

While some examples of Polish iconography may have influenced the wider, European Romantic movement, the development of Polish visual arts was not universally praised. In fact many critics, including Polish ones, did not believe that Poles were capable of creating important visual arts. In 1857, the critic Julian Klaczko wrote an article "Polish Art," for a French publication, in which he claimed that Poles were unable to create a national art, and that they were better suited to literature than to visual arts. Klaczko's reasoning was that Poles, as people of the north, were deprived of the sun and light that allowed other civilizations to create an original art.<sup>42</sup> This notorious article was highly debated and refuted, and despite Klaczko's beliefs, Polish visual arts would become a vital part of Polish culture by the end of the nineteenth century. However, early Polish painting from the nineteenth century was not universally praised, and many painters were considered by European critics to be unimpressive. The fact that many of these critics found Polish art mediocre is not surprising, given that the goal of the Romantic Polish painter was to create a "national" artwork, which meant focusing almost completely on content rather than form. The Polish theorists at the time felt that a true national work of art was a piece that had patriotic influence on the public, thus the subject matter included religious, historical, literary, or folk themes or motifs.<sup>43</sup> Almost all Polish critics of the time judged works based on their contribution to national art, rather than

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<sup>41</sup> Koropeckyj, *Adam Mickiewicz: the Life of a Romantic*, 113-115.

<sup>42</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 16.

<sup>43</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 5.

according to classical standards of beauty.<sup>44</sup> For Polish critics, landscapes were supposed to reflect the distinctive Polish character of the land, and genre paintings were highly rated if they focused on peasant themes. However, non-Polish critics believed the opposite. French and other European critics had little interest in the content of paintings and focused on the quality, which was considered sub-par in the Polish case.<sup>45</sup> These artworks that focused solely on content gave Polish art a bad reputation abroad, and it was not until the modern period that Polish painting became well-received.

With the failure of the final uprising in 1863-1864, and the growing threat to Polish identity by Russification and Germanization policies, Poles shifted their focus from rebellion to economic, intellectual, and scientific advancement. Inspired by French Positivist philosophy, Polish intellectuals developed a socio-cultural program called Positivism, which advocated working within the legal framework of the partitions to build Poland's material strength and therefore regain independence. Polish Positivists believed that their efforts would be more suited to helping develop the country's internal strengths, including keeping alive their unique cultural traditions.<sup>46</sup> Though the ideas and trends of Romanticism persisted in Polish culture, for the most part the Positivists turned their attention to focus on the material and economic development of Poland, rather than the armed fight for liberty.

The shift in Polish culture after the failed uprising of 1863-64 also affected Polish visual arts. As the dominance of poetry began to wane and prose was highly censored, the

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<sup>44</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 16.

<sup>45</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 6-8.

<sup>46</sup> Anna Brzyski, "Between the Nation and the World: Nationalism and Modernism in Fin de Siècle Poland," *Centropa* 1, no. 3 (2001), 166.

importance of visual arts emerged as a means of garnering independence. The socio-cultural program of Positivism, which was expressed in prose and journalism, emphasized a more pragmatic approach to gaining freedom, and this pragmatism was also evident in the recently evolved visual arts of the period. Artists were no longer depicting an idealized Romantic version of the past; instead they began using more realistic, historical interpretations of past events.<sup>47</sup> Though the development of visual arts away from Romanticism was gradual, by the 1870s the work of such artists as Artur Grottger marked a shift in the style of Polish visual arts. The works of Grottger best exemplify the shift from Romanticism, because in the 1860s, though Grottger was still using Romantic iconography created by earlier Polish artists, his later allegorical images of national martyrdom combined with the new realistic style. Grottger's most famous images of national martyrdom were a series of nine black and white sketches called *Polonia*,<sup>48</sup> which depicted symbolic, imagined scenes from the 1863 insurrection. One of the most important images in the *Polonia* series is the title page, which shows a female representation of Poland in shackles. This image exemplifies the connection between realism and symbolism as the entire image is completely realistic in design, but symbolic in message. In addition to his symbolic works, Grottger's later art was seen as a form of reportage, due to its detailed nature.<sup>49</sup>

The depiction of historical events in paintings that began with Grottger continued with Jan Matejko, who became Poland's leading artist in the 1870s and 1880s, and the

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<sup>47</sup> Stefan Muthesius, *Art, Architecture and Design in Poland 966-1990: An Introduction* (Königstein im Taunus: Karl Robert Langewiesche Nachfolger Hans Köster Verlagsbuchhandlung KG, 1994), 58.

<sup>48</sup> Artur Grottger, *Polonia*, 1863, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Grottger/Grottger\\_Pol.htm](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Grottger/Grottger_Pol.htm) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>49</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 18-19.

self-appointed keeper of the Polish soul.<sup>50</sup> Paintings of Polish historical events had been popular in Poland since the 1840s, but Matejko was the apotheosis of history painting in Poland. Known for large historical compositions, Matejko created art to commemorate the past glory of Poland, and inspire the national cause. Rather than just glorify the victories of the ruling class, Matejko painted his own interpretations of past events and personalities, adding political commentary. For example, he depicted a court jester known as Stańczyk in several paintings as the only person who was concerned about the neighboring powers that eventually partitioned Poland. In one painting simply entitled *Stańczyk*,<sup>51</sup> the jester is depicted alone in a chair while nobles are having a party after the victory over the Russians at Smolensk in 1611. Stańczyk is the only one in the image that is still worried about the Russians, showing Matejko's tendency to paint his own interpretation of a past event. Although some critics claimed Matejko's works were antiquated and boring, for the most part, his work was highly acclaimed in Poland and abroad, and Matejko was one of the first Polish painters to gain an international reputation. Matejko had succeeded in creating a national school of Polish painting, and as director of the School of Fine Arts in Kraków until the early 1890s, his style dominated Polish art until the modern period of art. The oeuvres of Matejko and Grottger helped contribute to a sense of Polish national identity by creating a Polish school of painting, but artistic institutions were also helpful in this endeavor.

The creation of a real Polish school of painting after 1860 was not only the work of Matejko and Grottger, but was also due to the successes of organizing artistic

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<sup>50</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 10.

<sup>51</sup> Jan Matejko, *Stańczyk*, 1862, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie., Warsaw, <http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Matejko/Images/Stanczyk.jpg> (accessed June 6, 2012).

institutions. The Kraków School of Fine Arts<sup>52</sup> was reformed in 1842 and 1852 by Wojciech Korneli Stattler and Władysław Łuszczkiewicz, respectively. The opening of the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw as part of the University of Warsaw in 1844 and the organization of widely publicized annual exhibitions after 1848 also greatly stimulated public interest in the visual arts. Societies of fine arts were formed first in Kraków and then Warsaw in the 1850s, and at the same time the first serious publications on the history of Polish art appeared.<sup>53</sup> The regular exhibitions arranged by various fine arts societies made art more popular for average people, and also contributed to the development of professional criticism. However, these exhibitions did not necessarily further Polish art, as the curators predominantly picked works with Polish subjects, rather than the best quality works. Furthermore, these societies were only able to pick Polish artworks from their particular partition, which meant that the best place to view Polish painting as a whole was at international exhibitions.<sup>54</sup> Nevertheless, these international exhibits did little to improve the reputation of “Polish art” internationally since these Polish paintings were displayed as part of their respective partitions rather than as a “Polish school.” Thus foreign critics and art viewers often remained unaware of the skill and quality of Polish artists.

In the latter half of the 1870s, critics began to shift their emphasis from analyzing the subject of Polish artistic works to the quality of these works, which led to the development of a Naturalist school of painting. When Romanticism was replaced by the

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<sup>52</sup> The Kraków School of Fine Arts was originally a part of Jagiellonian University, and became a separate entity in 1873 under the supervision of Jan Matejko. For more information see Krzysztof Król, “Historia,” <http://www.asp.krakow.pl/index.php/pl/akademia/historia-oakademii-33> (accessed October 15, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 8.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

historical style, art slowly began to become more realistic. The Naturalist movement was the end result of this transition, a reaction against Romanticism. Naturalists put more effort into the form of their works, and focused on painting more accurate pictures. However, Polish Naturalists still believed that the function of art was to serve a patriotic goal, and Naturalists continued to depict national themes, landscapes, and historical scenes.<sup>55</sup> The Polish naturalists were mostly young artists who studied abroad, and when they returned to Warsaw they found conditions unfavorable to their style. Polish art criticism had become staunchly conservative, and found the Naturalist style to be lacking in “academic execution.”<sup>56</sup> In the 1870s Polish critics were unwilling to accept new styles of art, and the critical onslaught against Naturalists was the beginning of the clash between the conservative critics and modern art in Poland.<sup>57</sup>

This clash greatly affected art during the modern period, as Polish artists were not just trying to win international acclaim, they were also struggling to earn acceptance for Polish modern art in Poland. When the predecessors to Polish modernists first exhibited their works in Poland in 1875, they were harshly criticized. One painting, by the Polish Naturalist Józef Chełmoński was attacked in the *Polish Gazette* for being crude and blurry.<sup>58</sup> This was the beginning of a separation of critics into those who appreciated modern art and those who did not. Two modernist critics, Stanisław Witkiewicz and Stanisław Przybyszewski, were crucial to the Polish acceptance of modern art. Stanisław

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 22-23.

<sup>57</sup> For my purposes I define “conservative critics” as those critics who only approved of artworks that glorified Poland in a realistic and “academic” style, and who rejected Modernism in all its forms. See Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 23-24.

Witkiewicz, a painter, designer, and architect, as well as a critic, was the first Polish critic to devote himself primarily to the visual arts. Witkiewicz was first published in 1881, when he began to fight for modern art. He argued that beauty was a function of aesthetic form rather than higher spiritual values as previously believed by Polish critics. In various publications, Witkiewicz embraced international modernism, believing that it could be combined with a Polish identity and would keep Polish culture fresh.<sup>59</sup> By 1900, Witkiewicz was appreciated for his help in creating a new Polish culture. Although Witkiewicz was an important critic and his views were widely accepted, strong conservative factions, who disapproved of modern art, still remained. One of the most outspoken conservative critics was Ludomir Benedyktowicz, who railed against modern art, especially Art Nouveau for being too decadent and foreign.<sup>60</sup>

Despite the strong presence of a conservative vein in Polish art criticism, Witkiewicz was not the only one working to help make modern art acceptable in Poland. Stanisław Przybyszewski and others were also crucial members of the modernist movement. Through his journal *Życie*, Przybyszewski defended modern art and accused conservatives of defining patriotism too narrowly. Przybyszewski's publications made him famous in and out of Poland, and, as he became more well-known, his views on art were widely accepted. His 1899 essay "Confiteor" is considered the manifesto of Polish modernism and links art with a higher truth, while also glorifying artists. In a later essay Przybyszewski goes on to explain that the artist is the soul of the nation, and it is his duty

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 25-27.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 28.



to glorify the nation.<sup>61</sup> Through numerous publications, Przybyszewski convinced the majority of Poles that art needed to consider aesthetic qualities, but that such a consideration did not mean that national identity was forgotten.

Polish modern art began in 1890, since that is when the first critics described modern art,<sup>62</sup> and the term encompasses about the next twenty years, during which time a cultural revival was taking place in Polish art.<sup>63</sup> Early Polish modern art borrowed European trends, with Impressionism being one of the first. A number of Polish artists experimented with Impressionism, but there were no Polish artists who painted exclusively Impressionist works.<sup>64</sup> In fact, most modern Polish artists embraced many artistic styles of the period and even used different mediums. The modern art period in Poland coincided with the *Młoda Polska* movement, and although the terms are often used synonymously by historians, the *Młoda Polska* movement encompassed more than just modern art as was previously explained.

In addition to Impressionism, Symbolism was another international trend that was present in Polish modern art to varying degrees. Like many art trends, Symbolism is particularly difficult to define, since it includes literature, music, painting, drawing, graphic art, and sculpture. Furthermore, Symbolism is confusing since many earlier

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 27-36.

<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that the term “Modernism” as used in reference to Polish art is completely different than Modernism in other countries. Modernism in Poland refers only to the period between 1890 and 1914, whereas Modernism in other countries refers to the period of experimental art in the twentieth century. All references to Modernism in this paper refer to the Polish Modernist movement unless otherwise specified. For more information, see Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 7-8.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 1-3.

<sup>64</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 18.

artists, such as Jan Matejko, used symbolism but were not “Symbolists.”<sup>65</sup> The Symbolism movement was the ideological approach of those artists at the turn of the century who opposed realism, and rebelled against the reigning tradition of academic objectivism. These Symbolists created images that depicted feelings of anxiety, dread, fantasy, and melancholy, among others; rather than just trying to depict something faithfully, Symbolists were trying to elaborate on the mood and atmosphere present in their art.<sup>66</sup> Aspects of Symbolism are also present in many Art Nouveau works, especially in those of Jacek Malczewski, who will be discussed later.

These modernists received the legacy of the Romantic movement, and while certain Romantic elements were present in modern art, they rejected the historicism of the previous generation, and sought to revitalize national art. To do this, many Modernists used traditional Polish motifs and scenes in their artwork. Modernists also introduced progressive international trends as a way of reviving Polish art, such as Symbolism, Impressionism and Art Nouveau.<sup>67</sup> The inclusion of international trends was concerning to critics who believed that using such styles would completely destroy Polish culture—one of the reasons that early Modern art was unappreciated in the Polish partitions; but in fact many artists remained dedicated to using Modern art in service to the nation.

In 1897 in Kraków, some of the most nationalistic members of the *Młoda Polska* movement, including most of the leading modernists, formed the group *Towarzystwo*

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<sup>65</sup> Elżbieta Charazińska et al., *Symbolism in Polish Painting 1890-1914* (Detroit: The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1984).

<sup>66</sup> *Fin de Siècle: Polish Art 1890-1914*, edited by Elżbieta Charazińska and Łukasz Kossowski (Warsaw: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1996).

<sup>67</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 1-3.

*Artystów Polskich “Sztuka”* (Society of Polish Artists “Art”).<sup>68</sup> Around the same time, several other associations of artists began. The “*Polska Sztuka Stosowana*” (Polish Applied Arts) was founded in 1901, and worked at improving the quality of Polish decorative arts.<sup>69</sup> Both of these associations helped publicize Polish art and increased accessibility to it, especially through publications of their exhibitions. Other publications not associated with a particular group also helped increase public accessibility to modern art, such as *Chimera*, founded in Warsaw in 1901 by the art critic Zenon Przesmycki. Though lasting only until 1907, *Chimera* was an important publication since it showcased many new artworks; however, it lacked the social and political discussion present in other publications printed elsewhere, due to stronger censorship in Warsaw. An extensively illustrated review, *Chimera* featured articles by foreign and Polish artists defending their art against the accusations of conservative critics; the journal also focused on aesthetic issues, emphasizing visual arts and music.<sup>70</sup> For example, *Chimera* often featured the illustrations of Edward Okuń, whose work showed conventional Art Nouveau stylizations. Another important periodical that was not published as regularly and was not as well funded as *Chimera*, was *Życie*. Published from 1897 to 1900 in Kraków and edited by the important literary figure Stanisław Przybyszewski, and the well-known artist Stanisław Wyspiański, among others, *Życie* also published many Art Nouveau and Modernist illustrations.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 124. From this point on this group will be referred to as “Sztuka.”

<sup>69</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 36-38.

<sup>71</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 124.

It is important to note that around this same time several important changes occurred in the Polish system of artistic education. Julian Fałat reformed the Kraków School of Fine Arts in 1895, filling all of the important faculty positions with modernists. While Fałat was rector of the Kraków School, it moved decisively away from history painting, and more toward the modern movements. Then in 1900 the Kraków School of Fine Arts was officially recognized as an academy, and Fałat's work continued with the most important Polish modernists teaching at the academy. By employing the Polish modernists, Fałat was filling an important gap in patronage. Since the aristocracy was the main source of financial support for Polish artists, along with a menial amount of support from the new middle class, Modernists did not have the patronage that their predecessors had. The aristocracy and middle class were not interested in European styled artworks created by Polish artists; rather they still sought the older style that overtly glorified Poland. However, although private patrons did not appreciate Art Nouveau and other modern art styles, Julian Fałat did, and by employing modernists he gave them the financial support they needed to be able to paint their styles.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in 1904 a new school of fine arts was founded in Warsaw, which further helped broaden Polish modern art and supported modernists.<sup>73</sup> Kazimierz Stabrowski was responsible for reforming the artistic education at the University of Warsaw and creating a separate school of fine arts. Like Julian Fałat, Stabrowski hired modernists to teach at Warsaw's school, and gave them the necessary financial support they needed to create their artworks.<sup>74</sup> Although

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<sup>72</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 55-58.

<sup>73</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 55-58.

critics had originally opposed modern art in Poland, by the early 1900s it was a popular, and critically acclaimed, style, largely due to the assistance of institutions.

## **The Art Nouveau Movement in Poland**

Despite being considered by critics as a break with previous artistic styles, Polish modern art continued many aspects of the previous, patriotic trends I have already described. Polish modern art was still realistic in that basic forms were identifiable; however, it was less realistic than previous art movements in that Modernists were no longer depicting every minute detail in a scene.<sup>75</sup> Furthermore, almost all Polish Art Nouveau artists used folk culture in their works, much like their predecessors.<sup>76</sup> Most importantly, the majority of Modernists continued to use art as a means of assisting the political agenda which had been intertwined with art throughout the nineteenth century. Even though Modernists were using international trends, like Art Nouveau, they were still trying to create a strong “Polish” school of visual art, which would bring acclaim to Poland, and promote Polish reunification. Of course, there were some Polish critics and artists that advocated ignoring this political agenda and instead creating “art for art’s sake,” but they were the minority. Despite the European trend toward “art for art’s sake” that broke with traditions, Polish Art Nouveau did not exhibit a complete departure from

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<sup>75</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 11.

<sup>76</sup> The use of folk motifs was particularly important to Modernists, as they believed that members of the peasantry were “real Poles,” and therefore Modernists glorified peasant culture, and many even married peasants. The most famous example is the marriage between the poet and playwright Lucjan Rydel and a peasant woman, an event that was later portrayed in Stanisław Wyspiański’s play *Wesele* (1901). As was previously mentioned, folk culture was also used in the wider Art Nouveau style, and in other Modern art styles as artists throughout Europe looked at folk styles as a “purer” form of art.

more traditional forms of art, such as folk art, historical painting, and art as a means of furthering the Polish political agenda.<sup>77</sup>

While Art Nouveau would eventually spread to all three partitions, it was first introduced to Polish audiences in Kraków, the former Polish capital, which was under Austro-Hungarian rule. As the largest city in the Austrian partition, and one with a history of being a cultural center, it is not surprising that Kraków became the artistic capital of the Polish partitions by the middle of the nineteenth century, especially since the Austro-Hungarian Empire was the most liberal of the partitioning powers. After 1866, Kraków and the entire region of Galicia were given a relatively large amount of autonomy largely as a result of an empire-wide shift toward autonomy in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Kraków's autonomy was also a direct result of the Polish cooperation with the authorities, and the liberal atmosphere helped encourage new artistic movements to develop and grow.<sup>78</sup> Universities were once again allowed to teach Polish, and inhabitants of Kraków could express a measure of patriotism on the largest scale since the partitions were established.<sup>79</sup>

The freedoms in Kraków were particularly attractive to Polish artists returning from abroad. Most Polish artists during the partitions spent at least some time studying abroad, since restrictions against Poles made it difficult to get a good education at home; inevitably, when they came back they brought modern trends with them. Upon returning to Poland, most of the artists first went to Kraków, partially because of the liberal

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<sup>77</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Nathaniel D. Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan: Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2010), 5-7.

<sup>79</sup> For more information about the ways Poles expressed patriotism during the partition period, see Patrice M. Dabrowski, *Commemorations and the Shaping of Modern Poland* (Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2004).

atmosphere but also because of the modernization. Kraków in 1900 was rapidly modernizing, in fact during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century Kraków's territory grew, its population doubled, and its appearance modernized. The old Medieval and Renaissance buildings that were built when Kraków was the capital were restored and updated, often with modern interiors. While the aristocracy wanted to keep a "Polish" style to the city, other city-dwellers wanted to create a European city, and therefore Kraków's modern future had to coexist with its past, much like Polish art at the time had to combine a "Polish" past with European styles.<sup>80</sup> This rapid modernization coupled with the desire to keep a national identity made Kraków the perfect place for trends like Art Nouveau to flourish, especially given Polish Modernists' struggle to combine their "traditional" culture with innovative trends. Modern Polish art, including Art Nouveau, eventually spread to other urban centers in the other partitions; for example Lwów, which was incorporated into the Kingdom of Poland in the fourteenth century, also became a Polish cultural capital, as did Warsaw (although to a lesser extent). Kraków, however, would remain the center of Art Nouveau in partitioned Poland.

Though there were differences between Polish and European Art Nouveau, Polish artists incorporated many elements of the wider movement, clearly referencing the style, and proving their works to be Art Nouveau. For example, linearized and simplified forms of plants were often used in Art Nouveau works throughout the world, including in Poland. Many times these simplified forms were transformed into organic shapes that were then colored a single bold color, ignoring the specific details of the original form. Furthermore, the popular motif of highly sexualized and idealized women was also adapted from the European movement by Polish artists. Some Polish artists also

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<sup>80</sup> Wood, *Becoming Metropolitan : Urban Selfhood and the Making of Modern Cracow*, 5-15.



incorporated the Asian influences present in European Art Nouveau, and almost all Polish artists used the decorative, graphic borders common in the wider movement. Most of all, Polish Art Nouveau displayed the linearity and sense of movement that was so important in European Art Nouveau. However, despite incorporating these artistic elements, the Polish artists continued to reject the idea of “art for art’s sake,” instead adding their own national themes to their works. This “nationalization” of the movement caused the drastic departure of Polish artists from the wider Art Nouveau movement.

While Polish Art Nouveau followed many of the stylizations associated with Art Nouveau throughout the world, there were some aspects of the style rejected by Polish artists at all, such as the idea of “art for art’s sake” which was discussed above. Artists throughout the world were using Art Nouveau elements to make everyday items into art, but this had never been done in high art in Poland.<sup>81</sup> As previously discussed, Polish art had been charged with serving a national purpose during the nineteenth century, and conservative critics felt that this national agenda would be incompatible with modern art since they believed that Polish art was only “Polish” if it had nationalistic undertones, or portrayed “Poland” in a realistic, but idealized manner. However, modernists saw the inclusion of international trends, like Art Nouveau, as a way of bringing Poland into the modern age, and making Polish culture visible to the world. Although the Art Nouveau style did branch out into more everyday items in Poland, such as household goods, it was used for the most part in the “service of the nation.” Many Polish Art Nouveau visual works had nationalistic undertones, which suggests that the Modernists were combining new ways of painting with the long-standing goals of Polish art. While some critics, like

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<sup>81</sup> In contrast, Polish folk art was extremely decorative without having any deeper meanings. For more information and numerous examples of Polish folk art, see *Muzeum Etnograficzne im. Seweryna Udzieli w Krakowie*, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://etnomuzeum.eu/>.

Stanisław Przybyszewski, did advocate “art for art’s sake,” the majority of important artists continued promoting the national mission of art. However, this is not to suggest that the artworks of the Modernists were as overtly patriotic as the works of Matejko or Grottger. Rather the nationalistic themes were more subtle in Art Nouveau and other Modernist works. Besides using nationalistic themes, many Art Nouveau artworks included folk motifs, which was another way of glorifying national traditions.

Another important difference between Polish Art Nouveau and the movement elsewhere is that in Poland there was no real leader of the movement. Instead, there was a group of artists who worked to create an authentic art that addressed the problems of Polish culture.<sup>82</sup> For Polish artists it was a matter of combining aspects of the latest European trends with the nationalistic political agenda, and therefore making their art competitive in Europe, revitalizing Polish art, while remaining true to the political agenda associated with Polish art since the late eighteenth century partitions.

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<sup>82</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 1.

## **“Sztuka” and the Spread of Art Nouveau in Poland**

While there was no real leader of the Polish Art Nouveau movement, members of “Sztuka” were the most prolific and influential Art Nouveau artists. As discussed previously in the background section, before the Modern art movements, Polish art was defined by its theme, not the artist. A work of art was only seen as “Polish” if it depicted a Polish setting and glorified Polish history. In fact, conservative critics so dominated Polish art criticism by the mid-1870s that any new styles were rejected. However, while Polish critics approved of art as long as it glorified Poland, European critics typically found Polish art antiquated in technique. Józef Chełmoński was one of the first Polish artists to bring modern European art movements to Poland, with his exhibition of Impressionism-inspired paintings in 1875 at the official Warsaw “salon” known as the “Society for Encouragement of the Fine Arts.”<sup>83</sup> As mentioned earlier, Chełmoński’s works were harshly criticized for being too modern, despite the fact that his representations of peasants were comparable to the accepted “national” art. Even though Chełmoński identified himself as a Pole and depicted Polish peasants, Polish critics refused to accept his works as “Polish” because he was using the international style of Impressionism. These conservative critics continued to dominate the Polish art community until the late 1890s when the development of Polish modern art began to shift the very definition of Polish art.

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<sup>83</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 22-24.

The majority of the most influential Polish Modernists—including those who used Art Nouveau—had studied art in Europe. Like the Naturalists, once they returned home they wanted to bring with them the innovation and creativity found abroad. However, as the example of Chełmoński shows, it was not an easy task. Polish art had been charged with assisting the Polish struggle for independence since the days of the great Polish bards and the Romantic Movement, and the idea that all Polish art had to further this political agenda was firmly entrenched in the Polish art community. Accordingly, once these Modernists began returning to Poland they found an art community that was unwilling to accept Modern art because the conservative critics believed it would hinder the movement for national independence. Therefore, in order for Polish Modernists to paint the types of art (such as Art Nouveau) that they wanted, they had to combine nationalistic ideas with the new art movements. Through the struggle of the most prolific and influential Art Nouveau artists, the very definition of Polish art evolved, and grew to accept other styles of art.

By the late 1890s, a work of art was no longer defined as “Polish” only if it glorified the Polish struggle for independence. Instead, by incorporating the nationalistic agenda into modern art, Modernists changed the definition to include all art works, in any style, that were created by an artist who defined himself as Polish. By incorporating the political agenda, and producing works of art that were both modern and had nationalistic undertones, Modernists showed the conservative critics that Modern art was not a rejection of the political tradition in art, but rather an adaptation to make it more universally accepted through the addition of modern techniques. The most influential Modernists who used Art Nouveau belonged to “Sztuka.”

The first group of its kind in the Polish partitions, “Sztuka” was founded in 1897 by Stanisław Wyspiański, Teodor Axentowicz, Jacek Malczewski, Józef Mehoffer, and Jan Stanisławski, among others.<sup>84</sup> In 1897 when “Sztuka” had its first exhibition, it was met with public enthusiasm both in the Polish partitions and abroad, largely because of the reputation these artists had already earned. While not solely a group for Art Nouveau artists, the above mentioned artists, in combination with Kazimierz Sichulski, Kazimierz Stabrowski, and Edward Okuń made up the core of the group and all of these artists used Art Nouveau stylizations to varying degrees. The other unifying factor among the group was that all of these artists believed that art should include some aspect of the nationalistic agenda previously associated with Polish art; at the same time, they were more subtle about including this agenda in their works. Rather than painting scenes of glorious battles waged against the partitioning powers like their artistic predecessors, these “Sztuka” members distilled the political agenda by adding motifs connected with the Romantic struggle for independence, as well as Polish folk motifs.

The most prolific Art Nouveau artist in Poland, and one of the most well-known, was Stanisław Wyspiański. A student of Jan Matejko’s at the Kraków School of Art, Wyspiański helped Matejko and Józef Mehoffer restore frescoes in Kraków’s Gothic St. Mary’s Church, before studying abroad, where he discovered modern artistic trends like Art Nouveau.<sup>85</sup> Not just a painter, Wyspiański was also a stage and costume designer, poet, director, dramatist, furniture and interior designer, and stained glass designer. Regardless of the medium, Wyspiański continued to use art to assist the cause of Polish

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<sup>84</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 59.

<sup>85</sup> Wiesław Juszcak, *Malarstwo Polskie: Modernizm* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1977).

independence. Many of Wyspiański's visual works were inspired by Polish folk culture, as he often depicted peasants and incorporated folk stylizations into his works. At the same time, he also frequently depicted Poland as the crucified Messiah, a reflection of Mickiewicz's "Messianism" from the Romantic period.<sup>86</sup> Wyspiański also helped further Polish art through organizations and he was active in public life, holding a professorship at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and acting as a Kraków city council member.

One of the earliest of Wyspiański's Art Nouveau works was his stained glass design *Polonia* for the Lviv Cathedral, which was also part of a larger design for a stained glass window called *The Vows of Jan Kazimierz (Śluby Jana Kazimierza)*.<sup>87</sup> Designed between 1892 and 1894, *Polonia* shows a female representation of Poland collapsed, either dead or asleep, in the arms of her people. A cloud of red and orange flows out on the left side of the woman, and leads into a group of thorns in the bottom left corner. The people surrounding the woman seem to be waiting for her to awaken, while other people in the top portion of the window are reaching up towards the heavens. Juxtaposed against the twisting thorns in the bottom of the design are tall, living flowers on the top, also stretched up to the heavens, against a brightly colored background.

Like Grottger's cycle *Polonia*, Wyspiański's work evokes the "Messianism" of Mickiewicz. Both Grottger's and Wyspiański's works are allegorical depictions of a crucified Poland, and people despairing over her fate, but the two artists have completely different styles. Grottger's *Polonia* is drawn in a realistic and detailed style, where every minute detail is shown, down to the cross necklace worn by a woman in *Polonia on the*

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<sup>86</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 132-134.

<sup>87</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Śluby Jana Kazimierza*, 1893-1894, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Sluby\\_Jana\\_Kazimierza\\_1.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Sluby_Jana_Kazimierza_1.jpg) (accessed June 6, 2012).

*Battlefield (Polonia na Pobjowisku)*. Wyspiański took a different approach, simplifying forms almost to the point of abstraction. For example, in Wyspiański's *Polonia* the flowers are not overly meticulous; rather he just paints their basic shape and leaves the details out. While Grottger and Wyspiański had different artistic styles, they both included symbolic figures of Poland. Wyspiański's *Polonia* portrays a highly allegorical depiction of Poland as a woman, surrounded by the forms of people, descending into a cloud of "fire." Similarly, in the title page image of Grottger's *Polonia* there is also an allegorical figure of Poland, this time as a shackled female. Both artists wanted to show their take on the partitioning of Poland, but they each did it in different styles, although both artworks exhibit an allegorical figure of Poland.

Although Wyspiański's *Polonia* was never created due to the dark nature and modernity of the design, its design exemplifies Polish Art Nouveau nonetheless. Even from such an early time in the Art Nouveau movement, the Polish school was diverging from the broader movement, as is evident in Wyspiański's *Polonia*. The gloomy nature of the listless woman, the swirling cloud of reds, and the tangle of thorns shows the darkness that would become common in Polish Art Nouveau. Although the European movement was full of images of life, blooming flowers, and spring, the Polish school used darker images to subtly add a political agenda. By depicting Poland as a lifeless woman, Wyspiański directly expressed his political opinion about the injustice of the Polish partitions. Furthermore, the darkness of Polish Art Nouveau paid homage to the tumultuous times for Poles under the policies of Russification and Germanization, as previously discussed.

The darker mood of Polish Art Nouveau was present in numerous works by Wyspiański, including his designs for the Wawel Cathedral. Drawn between 1900 and 1902, Wyspiański designed stained glass windows featuring St. Stanislaus (*Święty Stanisław*)<sup>88</sup> and Prince Henry the Pious (*Henryk Pobożny*)<sup>89</sup> at the moment of their deaths, and King Casimir the Great (*Kazimierz Wielki*)<sup>90</sup> as he looked 600 years after his death—a bare skull wearing the Royal Crown.<sup>91</sup> Even though scenes of death are rare among Art Nouveau works, Wyspiański's designs of Casimir the Great, St. Stanislaus, and Prince Henry combined Wyspiański's national sensibilities with Art Nouveau stylizations. For example, the flowing lines in the backgrounds of Wyspiański's images, which suggest motion, were used throughout the Art Nouveau movement, while the morbidity of the design spoke to the darker aspect of the Polish movement. Furthermore, Wyspiański was continuing the political agenda by showing historical figures, much as Matejko had previously done, only with a modern style.

Not all of Wyspiański's designs were as dark as his designs of St. Stanislaus, Prince Henry the Pious, King Casimir the Great, and *Polonia*. In fact Wyspiański's designs for the Franciscan Church in Kraków are lively and bright. Hired in 1897 to design the interior and stained glass windows, Wyspiański strove to pay homage to the Franciscan love of nature, while also incorporating motifs to express the desire for Polish

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<sup>88</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Święty Stanisław*, 1900-1902, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Sw\\_Stanislaw.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Sw_Stanislaw.jpg) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Henryk Pobożny*, 1900-1902, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Henryk\\_Pobozny.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Henryk_Pobozny.jpg) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>90</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Kazimierz Wielki*, 1900-1902, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Kazimierz\\_Wielki.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Kazimierz_Wielki.jpg) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>91</sup> "Guide to Krakow- Old Town," *Krakow Travel*, accessed June 8, 2012. <http://Krakow.travel/guide-to-krakow/let-s-visit/old-town/id,2601,action,get.html>.



independence and foster national culture. The most famous stained glass window in the Franciscan Church, and one of the most advanced Art Nouveau creations of its time, is called *God the Father- Let It Be (Bóg Ojciec - Stań się)*.<sup>92</sup> It depicts God emerging from the cosmos while creating the world.<sup>93</sup> God materializes with a long beard that fades into flowing blue robes from an abstract blaze of sinuous colored lines of the rough sea. The cascade of lines in shades of blues, greens, and yellows, interspersed with oranges and pinks, gives the window a sense of life and movement, which is a basic principal of Art Nouveau. Wyspiański's other stained glass windows in the Franciscan Church have similar flowing, colored, linear forms as the backgrounds.

Wyspiański masterfully incorporated Art Nouveau into these windows in other ways as well. He included portrayals of flowers that evoked national themes, on the one hand, and international Art Nouveau, on the other. In one window where there is a representation of water, Wyspiański includes a group of irises—one of the most often portrayed plants in Art Nouveau works. By using irises, Wyspiański acknowledged the international aspects of Art Nouveau. In other windows, however, Wyspiański added poppies—a flower associated with Polish folk culture—as a way of adding a national element. In this way, Wyspiański evoked Polish folk culture and therefore Polish nationalism, showing that Art Nouveau could be simultaneously “international” and “national.”<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Bóg Ojciec - Stań się*, 1897-1904, Kościół oo. Franciszkanów w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Bog\\_Ojciec.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Bog_Ojciec.jpg) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>93</sup> “The Franciscan Church,” *Cracow-Life.com*, accessed June 7, 2012, <http://www.cracow-life.com/poland/krakow-franciscan-church>.

<sup>94</sup> Wyspiański also designed several other windows for the Franciscan Church in the Art Nouveau style. For more information and images of these windows see “Historia,” *Franciszkanie z Franciszkańskiej w Krakowie*, accessed on September 20, 2012, <http://www.franciszkanska.pl/historia.php>.

Wypiański also combined national symbols with Art Nouveau stylizations in his frescoes at the Franciscan Church.<sup>95</sup> The entire interior is covered with bright murals of intertwining and stylized floral motifs.<sup>96</sup> Lilies, daisies, irises, roses and poppies swirl about in greens, yellows, and blues, but rather than creating a sense of chaos, it is one of controlled harmony. The flowers reflect the love of nature so characteristic of the Franciscans, but Wypiański also added the Polish eagle among the flowers to evoke a sense of national identity. Furthermore, the geometric motifs around the flowers were derived from peacock feathers, which were both an international Art Nouveau motif and a stylization of Polish folk art. Furthermore, these peacock feathers had both political and religious connotations, as they were seen as a symbol of Christ's rebirth; in the Polish context, this connected Poland with the crucified Christ, and Mickiewicz's "Messianism," while also bringing about hope for a future rebirth of a unified Poland. Similarly, the images of nature were meant to have political connotations in Polish art, as lush nature was symbolic of the blossoming of a free Poland. These political and folk connotations of Wypiański's works in the Franciscan Church were typical of his ultimate goal to combine modern Art Nouveau style with motifs reminiscent of Polish, especially rural, Polish culture, as a way of furthering Polish independence.

Wypiański did not just work on interiors and stained glass; he was also a talented and diverse painter who created dozens of paintings of all kinds. Worth mentioning is Wypiański's well-known cycle of landscapes, *Views from the Artist's Studio Over the*

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<sup>95</sup> Since the interior of the Franciscan Church was commissioned, it is not clear to what extent Wypiański decided what motifs to include. To see pictures of the interior of the Franciscan Church, see "Galerie," *Franciszkanie z Franciszkańskiej w Krakowie*, accessed on September 20, 2012, <http://www.franciszkanska.pl/galeria.php>.

<sup>96</sup> David Crowley, *National Style and Nation-State: Design in Poland from the Vernacular Revival to the International Style* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 42.

*Kościuszko Mound (Widok z okna pracowni na Kopiec Kościuszki)*.<sup>97</sup> The 1904 version of the painting shows the blue Kościuszko Mound in the distance behind a green field, with a muddy road and autumn trees.<sup>98</sup> Dawn is just breaking and the sky is a light yellow and blue color, which contrasts with the dark lines of the tree trunks and muddy ruts. The 1905 landscape shows a much darker blue sky, with the sun barely appearing behind a thick cloud above the Kościuszko Mound and a dark brown field with barren tree trunks sticking up (see Figure II). The linearity of the trees shows Wyspiański's Art Nouveau tendencies, as they are painted in a curvilinear interpretation, rather than a realistic depiction. His earlier landscape of *Planty Park at Dawn (Planty o świcie)*<sup>99</sup> from 1894 similarly shows his use of Art Nouveau motifs. Wawel Castle is painted in the background, in a misty dawn while a tree lined avenue leads toward the castle from the foreground. The curvy, simplified forms of the tree branches give the sense of motion that was so often present in Art Nouveau works. Furthermore, Wyspiański did not simply paint the trees as they were; rather he added a sense of mystery and fantasy by making the branches curve in unnatural positions.

These landscapes are further evidence of how Wyspiański attempted to combine a national style with the international trend of Art Nouveau. Even before the introduction of modernist trends, landscapes were seen as a worthy national genre, since they allowed artists to capture “the spirit” of Poland, and therefore critics approved them as a means of

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<sup>97</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Widok z okna pracowni artysty na Kopiec Kościuszki*, 1904-1905, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Wysp\\_Widoki\\_2.htm](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Wysp_Widoki_2.htm) (June 6, 2012).

<sup>98</sup> The Kościuszko Mound was raised in 1820-1823 to commemorate the national hero Tadeusz Kościuszko. For more information see “Historia Kopca Kościuszki,” *Kopiec Kościuszki*, accessed June 8, 2012, [http://www.kopieckosciuszki.pl/?x=historia\\_kopca&lang=pl](http://www.kopieckosciuszki.pl/?x=historia_kopca&lang=pl).

<sup>99</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Planty o świcie*, 1897-1904, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, <http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Wyspianski/Images/Planty.jpg> (June 6, 2012).

expressing national identity.<sup>100</sup> This relates back to the fascination *Młoda Polska* artists had with rural culture as the “traditional” Polish culture. Also, by painting landscapes, Polish artists were evoking a connection between Poles and the land, a connection which had suffered when many Poles, particularly members of the nobility, were forced to immigrate after the failed insurrections of the nineteenth century. The connection between Poles and the land was also true of the peasantry, most of whom remained tied to the land over many generations. Thus by depicting Polish landscapes, Modernists were also hoping to connect peasants to art, since the land was an important aspect of peasant life. The connection with the land was a unifying factor among Poles and was a constant reminder of the existence of a nation that had no geo-political borders. Therefore, by painting landscapes with Art Nouveau stylizations, Wyspiański was once again combining an international trend with national connotations, and continuing the political agenda associated with art throughout the period of the partitions.

Even in his portraits, Wyspiański combined national elements with Art Nouveau stylizations, to create some of the top achievements of Polish Art Nouveau and further Modern art both in the Polish partitions and abroad. His wife, Teodora Pytko, who was from a small Polish village, modeled for many of his portraits, and represented in Wyspiański’s works the “true Poland.”<sup>101</sup> In 1905, Wyspiański used his wife for his painting *Motherhood (Macierzyństwo)*,<sup>102</sup> which is a prime example of his combination of national motifs and Art Nouveau stylizations (see Figure III). In the center of the

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<sup>100</sup> Anna Brzyski-Long, “To Signify a Nation: The Problem of Polish Fin-de-Siècle Landscape Painting,” *Chicago Art Journal* 6, no. 1 (1996): 27-39.

<sup>101</sup> “Krakow: City of Artists” *Krakow City Website* accessed June 6, 2012, [http://www.krakow.pl/en/kultura/krakow\\_miasto\\_artystow/?id=020.html](http://www.krakow.pl/en/kultura/krakow_miasto_artystow/?id=020.html).

<sup>102</sup> Stanisław Wyspiański, *Macierzyństwo*, 1905, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/wyspianski/wyspianski4.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/wyspianski/wyspianski4.html) (June 6, 2012).

painting sits Teodora breastfeeding her son, while her daughter looks on, painted twice—once from the front and once in profile—suggesting a secularized version of the Madonna and Child.<sup>103</sup> The girl and mother appear to be wearing traditional peasant kaftans embroidered with flowers and peasant folk motifs, which shows how Wyspiański added elements associated with the peasantry and therefore with “traditional Polish culture.” Wyspiański also added Art Nouveau elements to this painting, especially in the form of the golden bows in the daughter’s hair. Highly stylized and decorative, in typical Art Nouveau fashion, these bows were one way of integrating the modern, international artistic style with the “traditional” aspects of the kaftans. Similarly, many of Wyspiański’s portraits, such as the ones of the actress Wanda Siemaszkowa, actor Andrzej Mielewski, and Maryna Pareńska, all combined folk motifs with Art Nouveau stylizations. In most of his works, from stained glass designs to portraits, Wyspiański added elements associated with Polish folk culture into his modern, Art Nouveau style as a way of showcasing and embodying Polish culture, in keeping with the idea of Polish art as maintaining a political agenda.

Continuing the Polish tradition of art in the service of independence was a unifying factor in the works of other “Sztuka” members as well. Like Wyspiański, they combined folk and religious motifs with Art Nouveau to further the Polish cause in Europe, and to increase the acceptance of modern art in the Polish partitions. Another important member of “Sztuka” and prolific Art Nouveau artist was Józef Mehoffer. As

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<sup>103</sup> Wyspiański also depicted the Madonna a few other times. One example is *Madonna and Child (Madonna z Dzieciątkiem)*, a stained glass window design for the Franciscan Church, which depicts the Madonna holding Christ while they are both wrapped in a blanket emblazoned with Polish folk motifs, as angels crown them from above. For other examples of Wyspiański’s depictions of the Madonna, see Wiesław Juszcak, *Malarstwo Polskie: Modernizm* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa Artystyczne i Filmowe, Oficyna Wydawnicza, 1977).

was previously mentioned, Mehoffer studied and worked with Wyspiański, and co-founded “Sztuka.”

One of the goals of “Sztuka” members, and Modernists in general, was to create art influenced by Polish culture, which would also hold up in the international art scene. This was a priority for Mehoffer, more than for any other “Sztuka” member, since he was selected to design stained glass windows for the Church of St. Nicholas in Switzerland. As the first “Sztuka” member and Polish Art Nouveau artist to be commissioned for a major project outside of Poland, Mehoffer was especially pressured to exemplify Polish Art Nouveau. Since his works would be seen by the international community, Mehoffer had to be sure that they were high quality works of art that would meet the European standards for Art Nouveau; and since Polish critics would also see these works, Mehoffer also had to include national motifs. Begun in 1895, Mehoffer’s windows in Switzerland depicted Saints Peter, John, James, Andrew, Sebastian, Maurice, Catherine and Barbara, with Polish folk motifs.<sup>104</sup> Mehoffer’s window of St. Peter and St. John<sup>105</sup> shows St. Peter on the left side with his head in his hands standing beside a crowing rooster. Below St. Peter is the crossed key symbol of the Vatican, while above him is a ship, seemingly in the sky. On the right side of the window is St. John in a white robe pointing upwards at a seated Jesus surrounded by a golden light and angels, while below St. John is an eagle,

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<sup>104</sup> In order to reduce redundancies, I will not go into detail about all of these windows. For more information about the ones not discussed in this thesis, see Andrzej K. Olszewski, *An Outline History of Polish 20<sup>th</sup> Century Art and Architecture* (Warsaw: Interpress Publishers, 1989), 18.

<sup>105</sup> Józef Mehoffer, *Święty Piotr i święty Jan, karton do witraża “Apostołowie” do katedry we Fryburgu, 1896, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Mehoffer/Images/Sw\\_Piotr\\_sw\\_Jan.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Mehoffer/Images/Sw_Piotr_sw_Jan.jpg) (June 6, 2012).*

which is a symbol typically associated with him.<sup>106</sup> Throughout both sides of the window, all aspects of the images are connected through green, organic, leaf shapes, and white and gold arches, as well as scrolls in the Art Nouveau style. The shapes of many of the leaves are reminiscent of Polish folk art stylizations, which subtly express Mehoffer's Polish identity. Similarly, the window depicting St. Sebastian and St. Maurice<sup>107</sup> also combines national motifs with Art Nouveau style. Both saints are depicted standing in long robes in a field of lush red, orange, and yellow flowers, in front of a mountain of purple stones, while below the main image the two saints are also depicted dying amid the flowers. Above the saints are black crows flying in the sky, and a geometric border leading to women at the very top of the window. The shapes of the geometric border are reminiscent of the Art Nouveau style, as are the irises which bloom at the feet of the saints. Also in the field of flowers, Mehoffer includes a Polish national symbol— red poppies—which shows the influence of his Polish identity. Many of the other windows depicting saints are similarly styled, with a mix of religious images, subtle references to Polish national symbols, and Art Nouveau motifs.

Mehoffer continued to incorporate a variety of motifs in stained glass windows designed for other locations. A prime example of Mehoffer's stained glass style is *Vita Somnium Breve*,<sup>108</sup> which he designed in 1904. Three smiling women, personifying the fine arts of painting, sculpture, and architecture, are seated under the protective wings of

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<sup>106</sup> Leopold Fonck, "St. John the Evangelist," *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, New York: Robert Appleton Company, 1910, accessed September 20, 2012, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08492a.htm>.

<sup>107</sup> Józef Mehoffer, *Święty Sebastian i święty Maurycy karton do witraża "Męczennicy" do katedry we Fryburgu*, 1899, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Mehoffer/Images/Sw\\_Sebastian\\_sw\\_Maurycy.jpg](http://www.pinakoteka.zascianek.pl/Mehoffer/Images/Sw_Sebastian_sw_Maurycy.jpg) (June 6, 2012).

<sup>108</sup> Józef Mehoffer, *Vita Somnium Breve*, 1904, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer12.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer12.html) (accessed June 6, 2012).

a female personification of genius.<sup>109</sup> Dressed in flowing gowns of green, purple, and black, each woman has a crown upon her head. Below these women lies the corpse of a young girl with a skull, encircled by a flower garland. The corpse is open to interpretation, but could potentially be symbolic of Poland at the time, since although Poland is not “alive” the arts are still flourishing. By showing the arts as alive and reigning, Mehoffer could be gesturing to the strong role played by arts in Polish society, even in the absence of a geo-political state.

Besides stained-glass designs, Mehoffer also did stage design, interior design, furniture design, easel painting, and drawing. Throughout his career, Mehoffer continued to add political undertones to his works.<sup>110</sup> In many paintings, Mehoffer depicts nature with extreme realistic detail, while also including strong linear rhythm and bold colors, more characteristic of Art Nouveau than Realism. Also, he often linked religious motifs with secular themes, and historical figures with folk patterns.<sup>111</sup> All of these elements helped advance Polish Art Nouveau from a simple borrowing of an international style to a nationally created one that included adding rural motifs considered “traditionally Polish.”

One of Mehoffer’s most famous paintings *The Strange Garden (Dziwny ogród)*<sup>112</sup> is also a perfect example of the way he, like many Polish artists, combined folk motifs with Art Nouveau. Painted in 1903, *The Strange Garden* shows Mehoffer’s naked son in

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<sup>109</sup> “*Vita Somnium Breve*,” *Wirtualne Muzeum Secesji*, accessed June 6, 2012, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer12.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer12.html).

<sup>110</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 58.

<sup>111</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 134.

<sup>112</sup> Józef Mehoffer, *Dziwny ogród*, 1903, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer1.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer1.html) (June 6, 2012).



the foreground holding flowers in each hand, walking out of a forest into the sunlight. Behind the son, in the mid-ground of the painting in the shade of the forest, is Mehoffer's wife in a brilliant blue dress, and further behind her in the background is a servant dressed in a traditional Polish folk costume.<sup>113</sup> The painting is full of feelings of familial bliss, while also speaking to both traditional culture and modernity. Mehoffer's wife is in modern, fashionable dress, suggesting modernity, while the servant is in traditional folk dress, functioning as a possible reminder to the viewer of the importance of keeping Polish traditions alive. Unlike most Art Nouveau paintings in Poland and abroad, the flowers and trees of *The Strange Garden* are not highly stylized as in Art Nouveau, rather they are depicted realistically with intricate details. The Art Nouveau element comes into play with the giant golden dragonfly that floats above the figures.<sup>114</sup> Highly stylized to look like stained glass, the dragonfly is both intriguing and menacing—much like the modern world was at the turn of the century as new technologies both intrigued and concerned people throughout Europe.<sup>115</sup> Mehoffer's naked son conveys the wonderment and innocence of childhood, while also conveying hope for the future regeneration of Poland, adding the political undertones characteristic of "Sztuka" artists.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Kossowska, Irena. "Józef Mehoffer." *Culture.pl*. Accessed June 10, 2012.

<sup>114</sup> The dragonfly in *The Strange Garden* has been subject to much debate, even as recently as 2011. For more information about the possible symbolism behind the dragonfly see "Zagadka wielkiej wazki. W dziwnym ogrodzie polskich symbolistów," *Kultura Gazeta.pl*, October 4, 2011. Accessed September 19, 2012. [http://kultura.gazeta.pl/kultura/1,118269,10284332,Zagadka\\_wielkiej\\_wazki\\_\\_W\\_dziwnym\\_ogrodzie\\_polskich.html](http://kultura.gazeta.pl/kultura/1,118269,10284332,Zagadka_wielkiej_wazki__W_dziwnym_ogrodzie_polskich.html).

<sup>115</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 134.

<sup>116</sup> Alison Smith, "British Symbolism and Polish Modernism c. 1900" in *Symbolist Art in Poland: Poland and Britain c. 1900*, edited by Alison Smith (London: Tate Britain, 2009), 16-17.

Although Mehoffer did not create Art Nouveau flowers in *The Strange Garden*, he did use the highly stylized nature of Art Nouveau in many other works. *Nature and Art (Natura i Sztuka)*<sup>117</sup> is a particularly strong Art Nouveau piece, and showcases Mehoffer's Art Nouveau styled flowers combined with national undertones. On the left side of the painting stands a naked young boy with a pair of wings, representing a young artist. Beside the boy stands a middle-aged woman with Asiatic features and robes—also with a pair of wings—representing art. The personification of art is directing the young artist toward a figure on the right side of the painting that represents nature. Nature is portrayed as a young girl, in traditional folk costume—also with a pair of wings—and she is holding sunflowers in one hand and strands of wheat in the other. Behind the young girl-as-nature is a storm cloud and lightning bolts, while a shining sun is behind the young artist. Between the two sides of the painting fly cranes in the upper part of the print, while a ribbon of flowing fabric connects all three main figures. The flowers, wings, and flowing fabric are all highly stylized with bold outlines typical of Art Nouveau.

More than just being a work of Art Nouveau, *Nature and Art* captures the feelings of the Polish artists who stressed the importance of looking at and depicting Polish traditional, rural, culture. Art is depicted as older and worldly, with Asiatic influences, while nature is young, fresh, and dressed in traditional folk dress, showing that innovation and new styles could be found by looking at nature and “traditional” Polish culture. Throughout his career, Mehoffer combined national and international styles to create a new Polish Art Nouveau style that would function in the service of creating

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<sup>117</sup> Józef Mehoffer, *Natura i Sztuka*, 1901, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer11.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/mehoffer/mehoffer11.html) (June 6, 2012).

support for a free Poland by showing foreign critics that Polish artists could create innovative art, and by showing Polish critics that Modern art could still further the national cause.

Similarly to Mehoffer and Wyspiański, Teodor Axentowicz also balanced Art Nouveau with the nationalistic political agenda. The best examples of Axentowicz's Art Nouveau style are his portraits and studies of women, which are idealized and often erotic, especially in the free flowing lines of his subjects' hair.<sup>118</sup> Idealized and eroticized women were a popular subject for Art Nouveau artists throughout Europe, and Axentowicz really brought this aspect to Polish Art Nouveau as well. One woman in particular, Ata Zakrzewska, was a frequent model for Axentowicz, and her flowing red hair was often the focus of his works. In the paintings *Ruda*<sup>119</sup> and *Spring (Wiosna)*,<sup>120</sup> the lines of Zakrzewska's flowing red hair add movement and eroticism to both paintings. *Ruda* shows a naked Zakrzewska from the waist up, with her hand on her chin, and her sinuous red hair fading into an orange background. In the upper right corner of the painting is the faint image of a snake's head, connecting Zakrzewska with temptation, and adding to the eroticism of the painting. Similarly, Zakrzewska is depicted naked from the waist up in *Spring*, but here she is holding a blooming yellow flower in one hand and a mirror in the other. In *Spring*, Zakrzewska's red hair is billowing out behind her, contrasting against the blue and brown background.

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<sup>118</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 24.

<sup>119</sup> Teodor Axentowicz, *Ruda*, 1899, Muzeum Narodowe w Krakowie, Kraków, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/axentowicz/axentowicz3.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/axentowicz/axentowicz3.html) (June 6, 2012).

<sup>120</sup> Teodor Axentowicz, *Wiosna*, 1900, Muzeum Mazowieckie w Płocku, Płock, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/axentowicz/axentowicz4.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/axentowicz/axentowicz4.html) (June 6, 2012).

Axentowicz also used a sketch of Zakrzewska for the cover of the Kraków literary weekly *Życie* in 1898, and in a poster for the second exhibition of “Sztuka” that same year (see Figure IV). Both images show Zakrzewska with a crown of leaves around her face, and in the “Sztuka” poster her flowing red hair is prominently displayed beside her head and over her shoulder. The combination of woman and nature, especially with the fluid lines, make these images wonderful examples of Art Nouveau. Eroticized women were often painted by Art Nouveau artists to show the vitality and freshness of the new era, and in the Polish case, these women also showed the promise for the rebirth of Poland. The crowns of leaves also suggest stylized forms of peasant kerchiefs, which connects the Art Nouveau style to “traditional” Polish culture, which was viewed as the “national” culture by many. Furthermore, by painting works so similar in style to the European Art Nouveau movement, Axentowicz was helping create a strong national identity of Poland as an artistic center on the same level as the European artistic centers.

Another member of “Sztuka” who helped forge a strong national identity through combining national motifs with the international art trend of Art Nouveau was Kazimierz Sichulski. Like so many of his contemporaries, Sichulski pursued the arts and crafts, including stained glass, mosaics, and tapestries, as well as interior design and architecture, which helped to develop the idea of Poland as a cultural capital by showing that Polish artists worked in many mediums. Many of Sichulski’s works depicted the East Carpathian peoples, known as Huzuls or Hutsuls, but instead of realistic depictions, Sichulski used the flowing lines of Art Nouveau, with flower and ethnic motifs, to create

highly stylized images.<sup>121</sup> Caricatures were also a particular specialty of Sichulski, and he also used Art Nouveau techniques in those as well.<sup>122</sup>

While Sichulski primarily created art after 1910, there are a few excellent, earlier examples that utilize the Art Nouveau style. For example, Sichulski's 1904 caricature of the poet and playwright, Lucjan Rydel (*Rydel i Gęsi*),<sup>123</sup> is a prime example of his combination of Art Nouveau stylizations and ethnic motifs. On each side of a seated Rydel is a goose with a peacock feather tail behind it. As I have mentioned previously, the peacock feather was very popular in Art Nouveau around the world, as well as in Polish folk culture. In this example, Sichulski paints the feathers in a curvilinear fashion typical of Art Nouveau. Sichulski then adds traditional Polish motifs to the designs on the bench where Rydel is sitting as well as to Rydel's jacket. By combining the traditional motifs with aspects of Art Nouveau, Sichulski was attempting to combine the two art styles, one new and international, and the other old and "intrinsically" Polish.

In *Angel (Anioł)*,<sup>124</sup> Sichulski again used peacock feathers, this time in the intricate geometric background. The main focus of the painting is a young girl kneeling in front of a blooming, leafy plant with a yellow halo and delicate wings. Her wings disappear into a geometric border on the right side of the painting, and peacock feathers are shown pointing downward below the border. While the colors in *Angel* are soft blues,

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<sup>121</sup> The Huzuls were Ukrainian in origin, however they would have been part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and therefore by depicting their style, Sichulski was still using a local folk style even though the Huzuls were not ethnically Polish.

<sup>122</sup> Gołąb et al., *The Naked Soul: Polish fin-de-siècle Paintings from the National Museum, Poznań*, 72.

<sup>123</sup> Kazimierz Sichulski, *Rydel i Gęsi*, 1904, Muzeum Literatury w Warszawie, Warsaw, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/sichulski/sichulski12.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/sichulski/sichulski12.html) (June 6, 2012).

<sup>124</sup> Kazimierz Sichulski, *Anioł*, 1911, Muzeum Narodowe w Poznaniu, Poznań, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/sichulski/sichulski8.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/sichulski/sichulski8.html) (June 6, 2012).

greens, and yellows, the lines are still bold, which is typical of Art Nouveau. The young girl is inspired by Huzul style, and the combination between the traditional Polish girl and the decorative delicacy of the wings and background is a pictorial example of the merging of Polish and international styles.<sup>125</sup>

Similarly, in his design for a stained glass triptych *Spring (Wiosna)*,<sup>126</sup> Sichulski combined Art Nouveau style with political undertones. The center image shows a young woman holding a child, while they both stand in a field of flowers. On both sides are young boys with their hands folded in prayer, also standing among flowers. All four figures are garbed in peasant dress, and styled in the Huzul fashion. The curvy, dark lines of the simplified flowers, add movement and life to the composition, making it a typical Art Nouveau work. By portraying praying figures in the spring, Sichulski seems to be suggesting the patience and hope of the Polish people, who were praying for the rebirth of an independent Poland. Furthermore, by depicting a peasant style of dress, Sichulski was referencing the fascination with rural culture, and the widely held belief in the partitions that the peasantry represented “true” Polish culture. By combining the peasant culture with the Art Nouveau style, Sichulski was once again answering the charge for art to assist the independence movement, while creating innovative art.

Jacek Malczewski was another member of “Sztuka” who also combined his desire to create stylistically modern art with a political agenda. Although Malczewski is

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<sup>125</sup> Piotr Kopszak and Andrzej Szczerski, “The Young Poland Movement: Art, Nation, Modernity,” in *Symbolist Art in Poland: Poland and Britain c. 1900*, edited by Alison Smith (London: Tate Britain, 2009), 29-30.

<sup>126</sup> Kazimierz Sichulski, *Wiosna*, 1909, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/sichulski/sichulski4.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/sichulski/sichulski4.html) (accessed June 6, 2012).

primarily considered a symbolist, some of his works, including his 1898 *Spring*<sup>127</sup> used Art Nouveau stylizations. *Spring* shows a naked woman lifted off the ground, wrapped in delicate arms of various plants and vines. The graceful lines of the plants, and the motion they suggest are commonly associated with European Art Nouveau, as is the highly idealized female form. Malczewski's image gives the impression of political undertones, as the use of spring seems to suggest the hope for a free Poland, one that would emerge like spring from the dead of winter. The use of spring to show the hope for a free Poland would be used, again and again, by Polish Art Nouveau artists, as was shown in Sichulski's *Spring*. Likewise, many Polish Art Nouveau artists would use autumn and winter in their works to show the despondency of the Polish political situation, portraying the process of waiting for the "resurrection" of Poland, much like people in the depths of winter waiting for spring.

For example, Kazimierz Stabrowski, another example of a "Sztuka" artist, used winter in his works and combined national motifs with Art Nouveau stylizations. The beginning of Stabrowski's Art Nouveau tendencies is evident in an untitled painting featuring a naked woman against a background of peacock feathers.<sup>128</sup> The simplified forms of peacock feathers were an early example of a motif that would be heavily used by Stabrowski and other Art Nouveau artists around the world to symbolize rebirth, and in the Polish case to also pay homage to folk culture. Stabrowski revisited the peacock motif many times, including in his portrait of Zofia Borucińska, *Peacock—Against the*

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<sup>127</sup> Jacek Malczewski, *Wiosna*, 1898, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 105.

<sup>128</sup> Kazimierz Stabrowski. *Untitled*. Desa Unicum, Warszawa. <http://www.desa.pl/pl/Aukcje/162-aukcja-dziel-sztuki/021.html> (accessed June 5, 2012).

*Background of Stained Glass (Paw. Na tle witraża)*.<sup>129</sup> In this portrait, Zofia is pictured in a shimmering blue dress with peacock eyes near the hem, and a peacock crown on her head, against a rouged background imitating the abstract patterns of stained glass. This painting is a combination of the tendency to use both women and peacock feathers as symbols of rejuvenation and rebirth.

Almost the exact opposite is Stabrowski's Portrait of Emilia Auszpitz, *Tale of the Waves (Opowieść fal)*<sup>130</sup> from 1910. In this painting, Emilia is shown emerging from the ocean in a gown that coordinates with the white foam of the waves, with pearl decorations on her gown and necklace, carrying a large shell filled with strands of pearls. The emerging woman is reminiscent of a birth, since she is coming out of the ocean much like a goddess. The ornate decorations and organic curves of her dress as it fades into the ocean are examples of Art Nouveau, but this painting is very different from the portrait of Zofia Borucińska. While Zofia's portrait is full of dark, rich colors, Emilia's is so light that it is almost ethereal; both, however, show curvilinear lines characteristic of Art Nouveau, as well as act as symbols of rebirth. Despite the different styles of these two works, they both exhibit Art Nouveau stylizations, showing the diversity of the artistic movement. Furthermore, through their use of images suggesting rebirth, they both hint at the political undertones that were part of the movement to assist Polish independence through forging a strong national identity and art.

Not all Polish Art Nouveau manifested itself in paintings or stained glass. Graphic arts, for example, were also particularly important to Polish Art Nouveau. One of the

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<sup>129</sup> Kazimierz Stabrowski, *Paw. Na tle witraża*, 1908, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/stabrowski/stabrowski1.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/stabrowski/stabrowski1.html) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>130</sup> Kazimierz Stabrowski, *Opowieść fal*, 1910, Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, Warsaw, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/stabrowski/stabrowski2.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/stabrowski/stabrowski2.html) (accessed June 6, 2012).



most prolific graphic artists was Edward Okuń, who used Art Nouveau techniques in many of his works, while also incorporating national themes like his fellow “Sztuka” members. Although Okuń had a diverse oeuvre, he was most known for his graphic art, specifically illustrations.<sup>131</sup>

From 1901 to 1907 Okuń worked as an illustrator of *Chimera*, and in many of his illustrations he used Art Nouveau stylizations. One of his earliest illustrations in *Chimera*, a vignette printed in 1901,<sup>132</sup> shows a young violinist synthesized with her surroundings through the locks of her hair flowing out in sweeping curves to become the fields and river behind her.<sup>133</sup> The curvilinear lines of Art Nouveau were used by Okuń to show the inspiration that could be found in one’s native land, and thereby encouraging national culture and showing pride for Polish traditions. Similar in style, Okuń’s 1902 cover of *Chimera*<sup>134</sup> shows a woman stretching upward from a pedestal, with her body dematerialized into ribbons of flames. In the background is a cliff topped with dark trees, and a sky full of dark clouds. Again a woman is portrayed as wavy lines flowing into nature, showing the connection between nature and art. Another cover of *Chimera* (from 1904)<sup>135</sup> also shows a woman surrounded by a curved ribbon of lines, but in this cover the lines reach out to the star background, as the woman looks down. In the woman’s hair

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<sup>131</sup> Irena Kossowska, “Edward Okuń,” *Culture.pl*, accessed June 10, 2012, [http://www.culture.pl/baza-sztuki-pelna-tresc/-/eo\\_event\\_asset\\_publisher/eAN5/content/edward-okun](http://www.culture.pl/baza-sztuki-pelna-tresc/-/eo_event_asset_publisher/eAN5/content/edward-okun).

<sup>132</sup> Edward Okuń, *Winieta w “Chimerze,”* 1901, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/okun/okun14.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/okun/okun14.html) (accessed June 6, 2012).

<sup>133</sup> Howard, *Art Nouveau: International and National Styles in Europe*, 124.

<sup>134</sup> Edward Okuń, Okładka “Chimery,” 1902, t. 6, z. 17, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/okun/okun15.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/okun/okun15.html) (June 6, 2012).

<sup>135</sup> Edward Okuń, Okładka “Chimery,” 1904, t. 7, z. 20/21, [http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/okun/okun13.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/okun/okun13.html) (June 6, 2012).

are several flowers, and she appears to be wearing a traditional kaftan. All three images have similar stylizations, including the heavy emphasis on lines, which would become typical of Okuń's works. Furthermore, all of these images show the connection between women and nature, which was so important in Art Nouveau. Although his illustrations did not all specifically include motifs associated with Polish culture, they were drawn to show the sophistication of Polish modern art, and thereby encourage the idea of Poland as an artistic center. Since they were published in an art magazine, Okuń's works were available to critics and art patrons from all over Europe, and by creating stylistically impressive artworks, Okuń showed the possibilities of Polish art on the international scene. Through their publication efforts, Okuń and his contemporaries were trying to prove to the world that Poland was a significant cultural center, while also showing Poles that modernity was not something to escape.

Another graphic artist, whose works were very similar to Edward Okuń's in their overall style, was Jan Stanisławski. In the lithograph, *Twilight (Zmrok)*,<sup>136</sup> twilight is falling on the bare limbs of trees in an orchard. On the left side of the image is the trunk of a barren tree with branches extended to cover the majority of the composition, and in the background are various bushes. The twisting lines of the plants, both supple and delicate, reach up into the sky and dominate the surrounding landscape.<sup>137</sup> In typical Polish fashion, the image has a bleak atmosphere. Stanisławski also created many other works that combined the Art Nouveau style with national motifs, and he used other mediums besides graphic art, including paintings. He was especially known for his

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<sup>136</sup> Jan Stanisławski, *Zmrok*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau*, translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 376.

<sup>137</sup> *Fin de Siècle: Polish Art 1890-1914*, edited by Elżbieta Charazińska and Łukasz Kossowski (Warsaw: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie, 1996).

landscapes, which were celebrated as a source of national identity.<sup>138</sup> Throughout all of his works, Stanisławski, like his fellow “Sztuka” members, continued to assist in the forging of a strong national identity centered along the creation of a national school of visual arts, which simultaneously branched out into modern trends while incorporating “traditional” motifs.

The large number of aforementioned Polish artists who combined Art Nouveau with nationalistic themes shows that Art Nouveau was eventually accepted as a style, even though these artists struggled to make Art Nouveau accepted. In fact, it was only through the work of these Art Nouveau artists, and others like them, as well as supportive critics, that Modernism and Art Nouveau became accepted forms of Polish national art. There were two goals of modern artists and critics: one was to promote modernism in Poland, and the other was to propagate Polish art internationally. The “Sztuka” association was crucial to the latter goal, promoting Polish art abroad. Exhibitions held by “Sztuka” showed the art of many of the aforementioned artists, and helped show that Polish art was not boring or dated, but instead was fresh and innovative. Because “Sztuka” was connected with art movements in other countries, specifically the Vienna Secession, members were invited to display their artworks at exhibitions throughout Europe.<sup>139</sup> During the modern era, Polish artists became well represented in exhibitions. In 1906 alone, “Sztuka” artists exhibited 140 works at the twenty-sixth exhibition of the Vienna Secession, which was more than half of the exhibition space. At these international exhibitions, Polish artists were very well received. Even as early as 1898,

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<sup>138</sup> Anna Brzyski-Long, “To Signify a Nation: The Problem of Polish Fin-de-Siècle Landscape Painting,” *Chicago Art Journal* 6, no. 1 (1996): 27-39.

<sup>139</sup> Cavanaugh, *Out Looking In: Early Modern Polish Art, 1890-1918*, 81-97.

the first year Polish artists were invited, Polish artworks were favorably reviewed by Austrian critics Franz Servaes, Hermann Bahr, and Ludwig Hevesi, as well as the British critic William Ritter, and the French critic de Soissons.<sup>140</sup> Throughout the modern period, Polish artists like Wyspiański, Mehoffer, Axentowicz, Malczewski, and many others were favorably received at international exhibitions, which led to the acceptance of Polish art in international circles. This rapid change is remarkable given that in 1857 Julian Klaczko was claiming that no national visual art was possible in Poland, and that Poles should stick to literature.

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<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

## **The Wider Polish Art Nouveau Movement**

As I have shown in the discussion on members of “Sztuka,” the most influential and prolific Polish Art Nouveau artists were working on the highest level of art. These artists, such as Wyspiański and Mehoffer, were attempting to balance the nationalistic political agenda that had been placed on art in Poland with their desire to create innovative art that would hold up in the international art scene. In order to combine these two opposite goals, artists like Wyspiański and Mehoffer created high art that married international Art Nouveau stylizations with motifs that were reminiscent of rural Polish culture. While this high art, with its political agenda, was not created for the masses, there was a large movement of popular culture that developed outside of high art with aspects of Art Nouveau that were standard in the European centers.

Although it has subsequently been portrayed as an ornate style for the wealthy, Art Nouveau was a popular style throughout all of Polish society, which created a vast school of Polish Art Nouveau artists who were creating more accessible art. The broader Art Nouveau movement in the Polish partitions did not deal with the political meaning given to high art of furthering Polish independence. Instead it was meant as a way of bringing art to all classes. As part of the legacy of Positivism, modern Polish artists wanted to encourage education in the lower classes, including artistic education, and one way this was done was to make everyday objects, like advertisements and postcards,

more artistic.<sup>141</sup> While some critics saw the creation of artistic everyday items as a debasement of art, in Poland it was more about getting the public involved in modern culture. By adding different forms of art to Polish culture, from high art paintings and sculptures, to artistic advertisements viewed by many, Polish artists were attempting to create a well-rounded society, as well as a cultural center. In an attempt to make Poland a cultural center, Polish artists had to allow art to pervade all levels of society, including such elements as postcards in the Art Nouveau style. Furthermore, because these advertisements and postcards were not high art, critics did not expect them to further the political agenda.

Since the lesser-known Polish artists who used Art Nouveau stylizations in their works were not necessarily struggling to incorporate a political or “national” agenda associated with Polish art, the broader Polish Art Nouveau movement developed much closer with the outside movement. In most of these everyday artworks, artists were just trying to decorate and design in a beautiful, “Art Nouveau” way, without concerning themselves with incorporating the political undertones that were depicted in the high art. One of the most popular mediums for Art Nouveau stylizations was postcards. For example, one such untitled postcard depicting the Hotel Concordia<sup>142</sup> includes a vignette around the photograph of the hotel that is heavily influenced by Art Nouveau, as is evidenced by the curvy lines, and simplified shape of the depicted flower. The same is

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<sup>141</sup> Art Nouveau stylizations were also used in other everyday objects, such as household furnishings, including mirrors, serving platters, and furniture; however, this thesis does not deal with decorative arts due to the limited scope of this project. For more information regarding Polish Art Nouveau decorative objects see Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau*, translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999).

<sup>142</sup> *Vignetted Postcard*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 400.

true of many other postcards with vignettes, such as one called *Secession (Secesya)*<sup>143</sup> from 1900, which shows a red haired young woman standing with her back to a blooming tree, holding an hour glass in a field of yellow and red plants (see Figure V). This image is inside a T-shaped border of bold graphic lines characteristic of Art Nouveau, and beside the image is a caption “Gold sky—green flower / this is the design and tone of Art Nouveau” (Żółte niebo—kwiat zielony / to secesyi wzór i tony).<sup>144</sup> Besides the visual stylizations of Art Nouveau, such as the blossoming tree, the postcard describes itself as Art Nouveau, without leaving it to interpretation. This is a prime example of how these everyday artistic objects were used to disseminate modern art throughout Polish society. By explaining the art depicted on the postcard, the postcard actively educated the public who would see it. Based on the lack of “nationalistic” motifs, including those related to Polish folk culture, neither of these postcards are meant to be used to further the fight for Polish independence, rather they are artistic designs meant for the enjoyment of individuals.

Art Nouveau was used in more than just vignettes for postcards; in many cases it was also used in the main image. In a postcard by an artist called Kieszkowski from 1900, called *La Vue*,<sup>145</sup> a woman is shown with curvilinear hair, a peacock, and irises—three elements that exemplify Art Nouveau (see Figure VI). The woman is pictured in profile facing a peacock, and her hair is over her shoulder intertwining with several irises. While the peacock often has symbolic undertones related to independence and Polish folk

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<sup>143</sup> *Secesya*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 400.

<sup>144</sup> *Secesya*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 400. My translation of the caption.

<sup>145</sup> Kieszkowski, *La Vue*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 399.

art, it is more likely that in this case it is depicted simply because of its use in the wider Art Nouveau movement. Also in *Song of the Fields (Pieśń z pól)*,<sup>146</sup> by an artist known only as E. Lel., a profile of a woman is depicted solely by lines that make up her hair and then flow to create the landscape around her, much like Okuń's 1901 vignette from *Chimera*, discussed above (see Figure VII). In *La Vue* and *Song of the Fields*, the main artwork is completely styled like Art Nouveau, in contrast to other works that simply add Art Nouveau elements.

Wilhelm Wachtel's *Polish Characters*<sup>147</sup> postcards are one example of a postcard series that used Art Nouveau elements in the main image. Wachtel often painted Jewish themes, and in this series, Wachtel depicted three Polish people: the first is an older man teaching two children how to play a musical instrument, presumably related to Polish folk music; the second postcard shows a young Jewish boy being taught by an older Jew, possibly a Rabbi; and the third postcard shows two peasants in traditional folk costumes. In all three postcards, the lines of the clothing, the plants, and the backgrounds are all reminiscent of Art Nouveau. For example, the fringe of the older Jew's tallit is intertwined much like the hair in the postcard *La Vue*. Also, in the music lesson, there is a tree with simplified forms of leaves that are styled after Art Nouveau. In the folk costume card, Wachtel also depicts the traditional costume of Kraków, which includes a cap adorned with a peacock feather, and this feather flows into an Art Nouveau styled peacock feather border, possibly showing a connection between "traditional" culture and Modern art and helping the public feel connected with the modern artistic movements.

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<sup>146</sup> E. Lel, *Pieśń z pól*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 399.

<sup>147</sup> Wilhelm Wachtel, *Polish Characters*, 1900, in Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 398.



While these postcards show people Wachtel associated with Poland, and therefore are part of a political statement he was making, there is no underlying attempt at glorifying Poland like there is in the higher art of the time. Rather Wachtel is simply depicting groups of Poles to make art, and perhaps explain his own political agenda, not to further the Polish political agenda for independence. While not every postcard has an image depicting Polish culture, by using Art Nouveau stylizations on postcards, artists were making art accessible to the general public. Also, since postcards were easily distributed, they were a good way to show the world that Poland had a vibrant art scene that could compete in the modern world with the other cultural capitals.

For similar reasons, Art Nouveau was also a popular style for posters.<sup>148</sup> Like postcards, posters introduced art to everyday people, and were a way of gaining international recognition for Polish art. The history of Polish artistic posters began in 1898 in Kraków, when the first international poster exhibition took place there.<sup>149</sup> From 1898 on, artistic posters were important to Polish modern art for two reasons. First, the artwork of the poster itself was a sign of the artistic movements in Poland, whether it was just a flourish, or an entire image. Second, posters documented the various artistic events

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<sup>148</sup> Art Nouveau advertising posters are the subject of many scholarly works, and due to space I will not go in depth about this topic. For more information about Polish Art Nouveau advertising posters see Magdalena Czubińska, *Polski Plakat Secesyjny ze Zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Poster of Polish Art Nouveau: From the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow*, translated by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska and Jessica Taylor-Kucia (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2003).

<sup>149</sup> Magdalena Czubińska, *Polski Plakat Secesyjny ze Zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Poster of Polish Art Nouveau: From the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow*, translated by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska and Jessica Taylor-Kucia (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2003), 11-12.

that were taking place in Poland, and spoke to the growing cultural revolution in partitioned Poland at the time.<sup>150</sup>

One early example of Polish Art Nouveau poster art is from 1898 by Wojciech Weiss for a reception for artists at the Sokoł Salon.<sup>151</sup> After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków, Weiss became one of the first Polish Art Nouveau poster designers.<sup>152</sup> His Sokoł Salon poster shows a woman with a large red and black hat, and lines connecting the woman with the information about the reception. The woman's clothing is drawn in big, colorful, organic shapes, which contrast with the thin lines connecting the woman to the title. The linearity—as well as the colorful, organic shapes—exemplify Art Nouveau, while the fact that it announces a salon for Polish artists speaks to the budding cultural revival in the partitions. Another example of Weiss's Art Nouveau posters is “*Sztuka*”- 10th Exhibition (“*Sztuka*” 10 Wystawa)<sup>153</sup> for the art exhibition of “*Sztuka*” artists in 1906. The poster shows two cranes reaching for a curvilinear, snake-like form lying on top of the words advertising the exhibit. The linearity of the cranes perfectly expresses their movement in an Art Nouveau way, and, once again, the poster shows the cultural revolution happening in the partitions.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Wojciech Weiss, *Raut artystyczny w Sali Sokola*, 1898, in Magdalena Czubińska, *Polski Plakat Secesyjny ze Zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Poster of Polish Art Nouveau: From the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow*, translated by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczewska and Jessica Taylor-Kucia (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2003), 109.

<sup>152</sup> “Short Biography of Wojciech Weiss,” *Wojciech Weiss Foundation Museum*, accessed June 4, 2012. <http://www.wojciechweiss.pl/en/wojciech-weiss/short-biography>.

<sup>153</sup> Wojciech Weiss, „*Sztuka*” 10 Wystawa, 1906, in Magdalena Czubińska, “The Krakow Art Nouveau Poster,” *Zbornik (Muzej Primenjene Umetnosti)* 4/5 (2008/2009): 60.

<sup>154</sup> Magdalena Czubińska, “The Krakow Art Nouveau Poster,” *Zbornik (Muzej Primenjene Umetnosti)* 4/5 (2008/2009): 53-65.

Although linearity was a widely used aspect of Art Nouveau, and was especially popular in posters, there were also other aspects of Art Nouveau present in Polish art. The big, colorful, organic shapes of the woman's clothing in Weiss's poster for the Sokoł reception in 1898 exemplify another aspect of Art Nouveau, that of the simplified form. Art Nouveau works commonly depicted simplified flowers or forms, which was an Art Nouveau stylization. Another example of such poster art is Kazimierz Brzozowski's poster for the exhibition and fair of home products in Zakopane in 1905.<sup>155</sup> Brzozowski's poster features botanical graphics, and focuses more on the simplified natural form aspect of Art Nouveau than its linearity. The poster shows red, blue, and green flower and leaf forms above the written advertisement for the fair. Although it is not a linear poster, Brzozowski's work is a fine example of Art Nouveau, and shows the diversity of the movement. Similarly, Adam Dobrodzicki's poster for the new "Polonia" printing office and lithography studio<sup>156</sup> shows yet another side of Art Nouveau. Dobrodzicki's poster shows the Asian influences in Art Nouveau with the depiction of Asiatic women practicing calligraphy. The decorative border around the main picture includes Art Nouveau stylizations with curvilinear peacocks and plant formations. These examples from Brzozowski and Dobrodzicki show how varied Art Nouveau could be, and there are countless other examples of Art Nouveau posters from the same period. Furthermore, both Brzozowski's and Dobrodzicki's posters show that the broader Art Nouveau

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<sup>155</sup> Kazimierz Brzozowski, *Wystawa i jarmark wyrobów krajowych w Zakopanem, 1905*, in Magdalena Czubińska, *Polski Plakat Secesyjny ze Zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Poster of Polish Art Nouveau: From the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow*, translated by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska and Jessica Taylor-Kucia (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2003), 30.

<sup>156</sup> Adam Dobrodzicki, *Nowo założona drukarnia i zakład art.- litograficzny „Polonia”, 1898*, in Magdalena Czubińska, *Polski Plakat Secesyjny ze Zbiorów Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie. Poster of Polish Art Nouveau: From the Collections of the National Museum in Cracow*, translated by Elżbieta Chrzanowska-Kluczevska and Jessica Taylor-Kucia (Kraków: The National Museum in Krakow, 2003), 48.

movement present in partitioned Poland was not as concerned with the political burden put on art in the previous generations. Rather the artists who designed posters and postcards were more concerned with creating modern art that was stylistically “good enough” to be shown internationally. However, even though Art Nouveau artworks designed for the masses lacked the political agenda of high art, they were still influential to the acceptance of Modern art in Poland, and to the acceptance of Polish art abroad.

## **Conclusion**

The writings of the Polish Modernist critics were pivotal to the end of the debate over Polish artistic style. Since the beginning of the Romantic period, Polish art critics and artists all agreed upon the end goal of Polish art; art should be used “in service of the nation.” To Polish artists and critics this meant that art should be used to further Polish independence by depicting the plight of Poland, as well as by fostering a Polish culture that would assist in forging a strong national identity. Polish artists and critics felt that by forging a strong national identity, and creating art that showcased this, Poland would eventually become a strong reunified country. However, while virtually all Polish artists and critics agreed on this end goal of Polish art, it was the question of style that caused great debate in the Polish partitions.

Conservative critics believed that the only style of art that could possibly further this political agenda was a very academic, “traditional” style. They only approved of art that portrayed Polish subjects in a detailed and realistic way, with little or no artistic interpretations, because these conservative critics felt that only that style of art would be able to assist Polish independence. International trends, like Impressionism, Symbolism, and Art Nouveau, were especially disliked by “traditionalist” critics since these art movements were international and therefore these critics felt that they could not be used to further the Polish “national” agenda. However, Modernist artists and critics felt the exact opposite. To the Modernists, using the academic style of depicting detailed scenes would only make Europeans view Polish art as outdated, which they believed would

harm rather than help Polish independence. Instead, Modernists advocated using the new, international trends, like Art Nouveau, because these trends would show Europeans that Polish art was just as innovative and aesthetically interesting as the art of other European nations, and therefore Europeans would see that Poland was a cultural center. However, Modernists like Mehoffer and Wyspiański did acknowledge that in Europe artistic movements like Art Nouveau were “art for art’s sake,” which would not coordinate well with the Polish view of art as a means to an end. Therefore, once artists like Mehoffer and Wyspiański brought the Art Nouveau style to the Polish partitions, they began to adapt it to fit the Polish agenda, and these adaptations created a thoroughly Polish form of Art Nouveau in the high arts.

The most important way that Polish Art Nouveau differed from the wider movement is that in the Polish case this art was not just for “art’s sake,” rather it was in service to the political agenda. Polish artists did this by adding political undertones that expressed, or hinted at, their patriotic feelings. For example, many Polish Art Nouveau works had a darker tone than the wider movement, showing the anger and misery of the Polish people who lost their independence when Poland was partitioned. Polish Art Nouveau artists also depicted motifs associated with Polish folk art and the peasantry as a way of showcasing what they saw as the “real” Poland, and also connecting the peasantry with art. In the same vein, Polish artists also put “nationalistic” motifs, like the Polish eagle, into works to foster a strong Polish identity.

While these differences did separate Polish Art Nouveau from the wider movement, they do not mean that the Polish movement was completely isolated from the broader movement. Polish artists incorporated many Art Nouveau elements into their

works, including highly stylized flowers, flowing lines, and idealized women. However, even with all these elements from the wider movement, Polish Art Nouveau could not have become exactly like the broader movement because of the various political events that shaped Polish history and therefore left an indelible mark on Polish art. Most importantly, the partitioning of Poland in the eighteenth century created a group of people struggling to regain their independence, and this pivotal aspect of Polish identity unified Poles throughout the partitions to work together in an attempt to further the cause for independence. By proving that modern art could also assist this cause, Polish Modernist artists and critics validated Art Nouveau as a Polish form of art, and then Art Nouveau began to spread throughout the Polish partitions. After the development of a Polish form of Art Nouveau in high art, it was adopted for mass consumption. Postcards, posters, and similar printed media began using Art Nouveau stylizations as a way to disseminate the style throughout Polish society. Part of the Polish political agenda meant educating the public in the arts, and through printed media, Polish artists showed the general public the new form of art. However, because this part of Polish Art Nouveau was meant for the masses, it rarely showcased political undertones; rather it was just used to “inform” people about the development of modern art.

The development of modern art in Europe coincided with the emergence of nationalism as a major factor in European politics. Inside individual countries, nationalism encouraged artists to look within their own cultures and preserve the national culture, and this was particularly true for Poles. Since Poland was not an actual country at the time, it was especially important for Polish artists to preserve the national culture, both as a way of validating claims that Poland deserved to be a country, and as a way of

keeping the Polish culture from disappearing. On an international scale, nationalism also created a competition for preeminence. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the increasing number of international art exhibitions brought together artists from all over Europe, which led to a heightened awareness of the various national arts.<sup>157</sup> European artists, particularly Poles, accepted that art had an important social function, and that showing their art, especially internationally, was a way to bring honor and glory to their country or in the case of Poles, their nationality. As Polish artists adapted Art Nouveau to highlight Polish identity, it was widely praised in Europe for being innovative and Polish critics accepted it as a part of Polish culture. Through the written works of Polish Modernist critics, and the rich oeuvre of Polish Art Nouveau artists, modern art and Art Nouveau became an accepted aspect of Polish culture. The Polish motifs brought European attention to the partitioning of Poland and the plight of the Poles, while the international aspects brought the Poles into the modern age, and paved the way for other artistic movements. While the effects of art, specifically Art Nouveau, on the reunification of Poland cannot be measured, it is this author's belief that art played a pivotal role.

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<sup>157</sup> Anna Brzyski, "Between the Nation and the World: Nationalism and Modernism in Fin de Siècle Poland," *Centropa* 1, no. 3 (2001), 165-177.



Appendix



Figure I. Stanisław Wyspiański, *Polonia*, 1892-1894, drawing for the stained glass of Lvov Cathedral, pastel on cardboard, 298 x 153 cm, National Museum, Kraków. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 108.

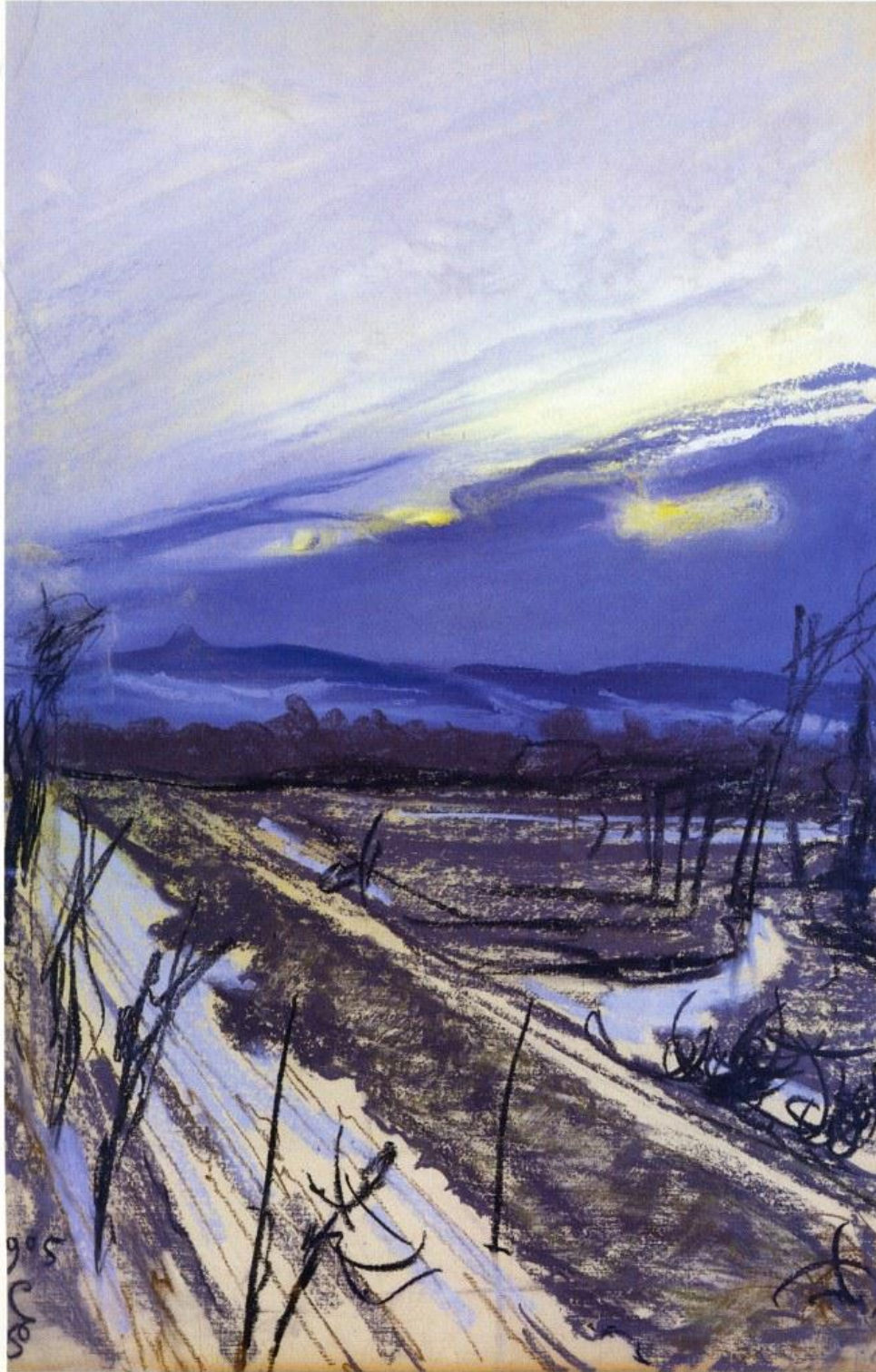


Figure II. Stanisław Wyspiański, *View of the Kościuszko Mound from the Artist's Studio*, 1905, pastel on paper, 90.0 x 59.5 cm, National Museum, Warsaw. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 320.



Figure III. Stanisław Wyspiański, *Macierzyństwo*. 1905. National Museum, Kraków.  
[http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria\\_pliki/wyspianski/wyspianski4.html](http://muzeumsecesji.pl/galeria_pliki/wyspianski/wyspianski4.html).

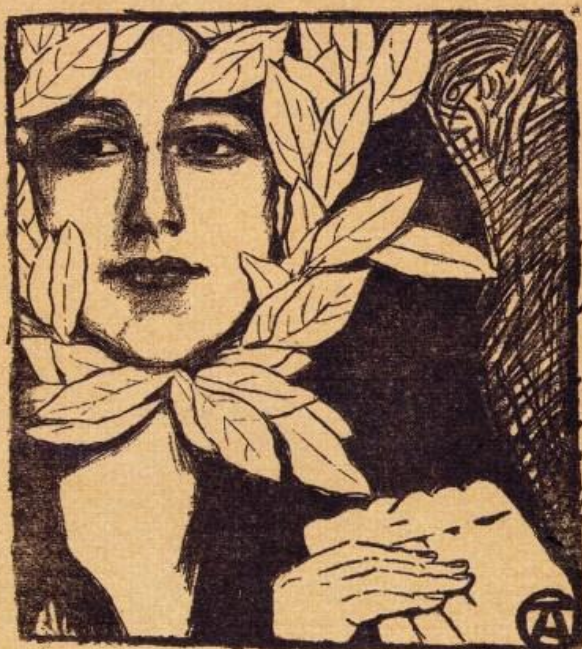
Nr. 25.

DNIA 25 CZERWCA 1898.

ROK II.

# ŻYCIE

TYGODNIK ILLUSTROWANY LITERACKI  
ARTYST. i SPOŁECZNY.



KRAKÓW

LWÓW

REDAKCJA I ADMINISTRACJA:  
KRAKÓW, ŁOBZOWSKA 27.

Figure IV. Teodor Axentowicz, Cover of *Życie*, 1898, National Museum, Kraków. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 392.



Figure V. “Secession” postcard, ca. 1900, color lithograph, property of Bożena and Marek Sosenko, Kraków. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 400.



Figure VI: Kieszkowski, *La Vue*, ca. 1900, color lithograph, private collection. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 399.



Figure VII. E. Lelewiński. *Pieśń z Pól*, ca. 1900, zinc etching, property of Bożena and Marek Sosenko, Kraków. In Stefania Krzysztofowicz-Kozakowska, *Polish Art Nouveau* translated by Krzysztof Kwaśniewicz (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Kluszczyński, 1999), 401.

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