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A HISTORY OF POLISH ART
BY MICHAŁ WALICKI AND JULIUSZ STARZYŃSKI
IN POLAND BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS.
THE WEST, POLAND, THE EAST*

When Poland regained its independence in 1918, Polish scientists and scholars faced fundamental challenges and tasks both as regards building institutions and organizations, and choosing directions and goals of research. A well organized and effective academia was an indispensable element of a sovereign state that aimed to take its place among other national research cultures.

Already before the end of the Great War art historians were pointing at the most urgent tasks and goals of their discipline. One of the most important postulates was to make a record of all the works of art and monuments of architecture as a way to integrate the artistic heritage on the territory of the restored state, which had been scattered and divided by the borders of the occupant states and thus ungraspable as a whole.¹ Regardless of that long term

* The present paper is an annotated version of the presentation made during a conference organized to commemorate the centennial of the study of art history at the University of Poznań on May 17, 2019. Its main objective is to identify in a nutshell the problems mentioned in the subtitle and the arguments related to them. The connections of those arguments with the intellectual, artistic, and political reality of Poland between the world wars as well as the theoretical and methodological assumptions of Michał Walicki and Juliusz Starzyński have been only cursorily addressed here – perhaps my reconnaissance will become a stimulus for other scholars to study the historiography of art in the interwar period, which has not been examined in detail yet. See also the final part of the paper below.

¹ The first programmatic step in that direction was taken already in 1917 by a number of Polish art historians who responded to an inquiry opened by Kasa im. Mianowskiego, an independent institution founded at the end of the 19th century to support Polish scholarship. The responses were published in the first volume of the journal *Nauka Polska*, which between the world wars became a forum of debates about scholarship in Poland. Historians often took part in such debates. In volume I “they wrote not so much about the subject mat-

project, on the agenda was also the problem of writing a scholarly overview of Polish art as well as the art of the world. Such an overview was considered a test of the quality of scholarship which could contribute to the legitimization of the statehood also through reconstruction and representation of the country's artistic heritage.²

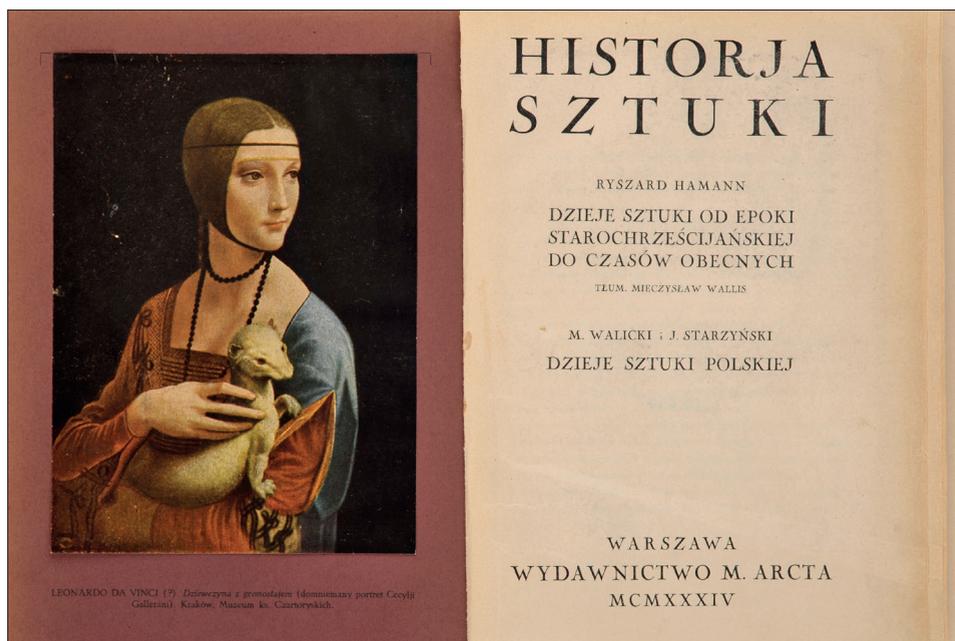
Writing an overview was by no means easy. The history of all the efforts in that respect is a separate question. Beyond any doubt one may claim that the most ambitious, most adequate, and in many respects still inspiring was the result of a joint effort of two talented scholars from Warsaw, who were then in their thirties: Michał Walicki and Juliusz Starzyński.³ Its first edition was a separate but integral part of *Geschichte der Kunst* by Richard Hamann, translated from German and published in 1934 (ill. 1). Two years later the study by Walicki and Starzyński was published again as a separate book (ill. 2).⁴

ter of research, but about its organization, practical needs, libraries, periodicals, publishers, and above all making records of historical monuments." J. Białostocki, "Historia sztuki," in: *Historia nauki polskiej*, vol. 4: 1863–1918, part 3, ed. Z. Skubała-Tokarska, Wrocław 1987, pp. 699–702 (here p. 700).

² The problem of the overview was addressed by T. Szydlowski, "O zadaniach polskich historyków sztuki," *Przegląd Współczesny*, 1923, 2(5), pp. 267–280, here p. 271f. See also S. Tomkowicz, "Uwagi o potrzebach nauki polskiej w zakresie historii sztuki," *Nauka Polska* 1918, 1, pp. 433–438, here p. 437f. and J. K. Kochanowski-Korwin, "O potrzebach nauki polskiej w zakresie historii," *Nauka Polska* 1918, 1, pp. 225–236, here p. 229, 235. Polish art historians were also expected to write an overview of the art of the world. Such overviews available in Polish before had been written by two German scholars: Anton Heinrich Springer and Karl Woermann. On historical overviews of national art in the 19th and early 20th century in a European perspective, see H. Locher, *Kunstgeschichte als historische Theorie der Kunst 1750–1950*, München 2001, 195ff; J. Bakoš, "Ścieżki i strategie historiografii sztuki w Europie Środkowej," trans. F. Lipiński, *Artium Quaestiones* 2013, 14, pp. 255–306, here p. 260ff.

³ On Michał Walicki, see memories and a report on his scholarly achievement in: "Sprawozdanie posiedzenia Komitetu Nauk o Sztuce PAN w dniu 16 stycznia 1967," *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 1970, 8, pp. 334–247; M. Walczak, "Michał Walicki (1904–1966)," *Rocznik Historii Sztuki* 2011, 36, pp. 127–136. On Juliusz Starzyński see J. M. Sosnowska, "Juliusz Starzyński (1906–1974)," *ibidem*, 137–155; A. Ryszkiewicz, "Starzyński Juliusz Stanisław," in: *Polski Słownik Biograficzny*, 42, 2004, pp. 462–465; M. Leśniakowska, "Władza spojrzenia – władza języka. Juliusza Starzyńskiego obraz sztuki i jej historii," *Modus* 2013, 12/13, pp. 27–52.

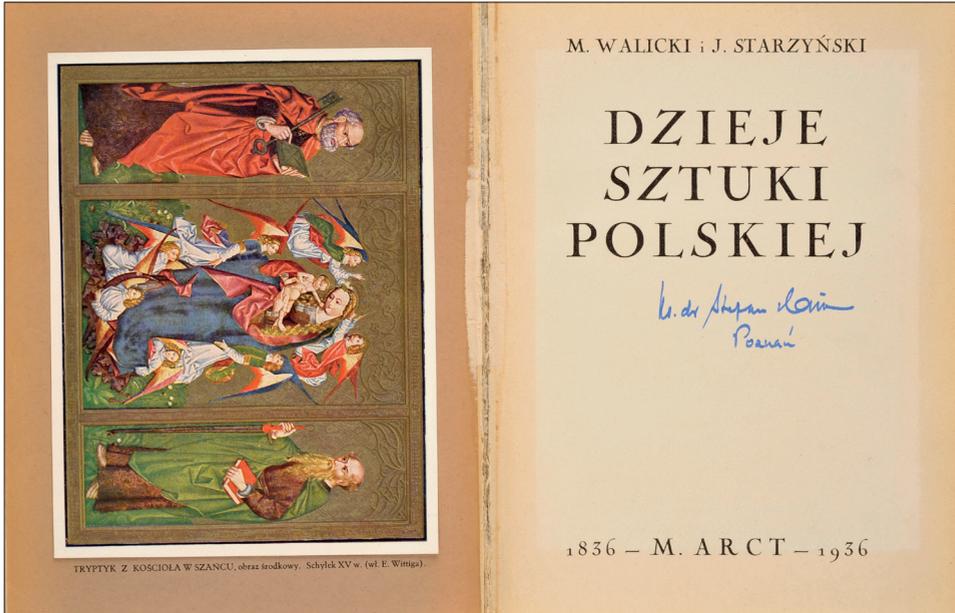
⁴ M. Walicki and J. Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, in: *Historia sztuki*: Richard Hamann, *Historia sztuki od epoki starożytności do czasów obecnych*, trans. M. Wallis. Warszawa 1934, pp. 909–1249; M. Walicki and J. Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, Warszawa 1936 (independent pagination) and Warszawa 1935 (as separate copy of the 1934 edition). A two-page "Przedmowa autorów" in the 1934 edition (p. 911f.) in the 1936 edition



1. Frontispiece and title page of R. Hamann's, M. Walicki's and J. Starzyński's survey, Warsaw, 1934 (photo: R. Rau)

An overview of the national art was in the historiography of those times a common approach to art history, closely related to the popularity of the national idea in the 19th century and the rise and triumph of the nation state. In 1918, the Republic of Poland, a kind of continuation of the state ultimately divided among three neighboring superpowers at the end of the 18th century, regained its independence as a nation state, just like Bohemia (at that time Czechoslovakia), Lithuania or Latvia. Ethnic Poles were its largest and most active group, which was potentially the cause of tension between the dominant majority and ethnic minorities which lived on the territory of Poland as

was significantly extended (pp. 7–16). The quotations below refer to the pages in both editions: the 1936 ones are placed in parentheses. On the Polish edition of Hamann's book, see R. Heftrig, *Fanatiker der Sachlichkeit. Richard Hamann und die Rezeption der Moderne in der universitären deutschen Kunstgeschichte 1930–1960*, Berlin 2014, 123f. Next to Walicki and Starzyński's book, other overviews are: Rev. Sz. Dettloff, W. Husarski, W. Tatar-kiewicz, M. Walicki, S. Zahorska, *Wiedza o Polsce. Sztuka polska. Historia architektury, rzeźby i malarstwa od czasów najdawniejszych aż do chwili obecnej*, Warszawa [1932] and chapters in: *Polska, jej dzieje i kultura od czasów najdawniejszych aż do chwili obecnej*, vol. 1–3, ed. S. Lam. Warszawa 1927–1930.



2. Title page and a frontispiece of M. Walicki and J. Starzyński's survey, Warsaw 1936 (photo: R. Rau)

well, very much like before the partitions.⁵ What contributed to that tension was the fact that some of those minorities, formed as nations in their own right in the 19th century, in the 20th century were self-conscious and developed their own political aspirations, hoping to gain independence as a result of the fall of the empires after World War I.⁶ Lithuanians achieved their goal (though they lost the region of Vilnius), while Ukrainians failed and that failure strongly determined Polish-Ukrainian relations.

The dominant position of ethnic Poles in Poland between the world wars and the multiethnicity of the country both then and before, i.e. before the partitions, as well as diverse historico-political status of its regions, were a chal-

⁵ I mean the post-romantic, modern understanding of nation as a community based on common ethnicity and language, as well as history, culture and religion. See A. Walicki, "Polskie ideologie narodowe w perspektywie typologiczno-porównawczej," in: idem, *Naród, nacjonalizm, patriotyzm*, Kraków 2009, pp. 421–522. On the state and minorities in Poland between the world wars, see A. Chojnowski, *Koncepcje polityki narodowościowej rządów polskich w latach 1921–1939*, Wrocław 1979.

⁶ See P. Wandycz, "Wiek XX," in: *Historia Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej*, ed. J. Kłoczowski, Lublin 2000, vol. 1, p. 416ff.; T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999*, New Haven and London 2004.

lenge to historians that resulted in particular decisions: some motifs were considered central while others marginal, and some elements of the artistic heritage were excluded in favor of others.⁷ The main object of interest of the two authors of *A History of Polish Art* was that art's identity. In fact, however, the material presented in their overview demonstrates that the title term "Polish art" is in many respects art made in Poland. The criterion which determined the selection was the territory of Poland at the moment and, in part, the geographical extension of the country in some stages of its history. The historically permanent core area included the old provinces of Greater Poland [Wielkopolska], Lesser Poland [Małopolska], and Mazovia [Mazowsze]. Historically correct was also the inclusion of the Romanesque Silesia [Śląsk], while the vast eastern territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early modern times was missing. The East was present only as the region of Vilnius and the former eastern Galicia. According the historical criterion, the study should have included the late gothic and early modern Gdańsk, as well as other towns of the Royal Prussia, but they are hardly present in the text. On the other hand, because of the geography of the present Polish Republic, the authors wrote a comprehensive and quite profound account of the art of the Teutonic Knights in the Chełmno region with the city of Toruń and the Pomeranian voivodship. Missing was also the architecture of Jewish synagogues, while the early modern Eastern Orthodox art was described only in part.

The subtitle of the present paper signalizes crucial problems that the overview included. The present paper is an attempt to examine the assumptions and specific historical decisions taken by the authors, concerning the artistic inclusion of Poland in the West, specifically Polish form in Polish art and the presence of the Eastern Orthodox art in Polish culture. Moreover, it addresses the question of the relation of the study to the political, national, social, and cultural reality of the Polish Republic in 1918–1939.⁸

⁷ In this context, one must take into account the still incomplete knowledge about the works of art to be discussed (the authors point at the scarcity of records), the range of the two scholars' task, and most probably a short period of time within which they were supposed to complete their study.

⁸ In the present paper, I will focus on the book by Walicki and Starzyński, but I will also refer to other publications from the same period, which stress the problematic of historical reconstructions and constructs that the two scholars address. Walicki transferred the content of his relatively comprehensive overview to brief essays on pre-modern Polish art, included in the catalogs of two world expositions in Paris (1937) and in New York (1939). He was also the author of specialist studies on table painting in Poland, and the painting of that period will play an important role in my argument below.

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Inclusion in the West has been a component of Polish identity. The study by Walicki and Starzyński is almost entirely focused on dependence as well as participation in the Western world. The authors admit that in relation to its source, Polish art is peripheral since it was developing in a country which is younger in terms of civilization than the West. Still, they do not qualify the hegemonic position of the West as oppression, unlike such non-academic historians as Ludwik Stasiak.⁹ It is significant that Walicki and Starzyński were skeptical about attaching the development of Polish art to the conditions of the European evolution, yet on the other hand they accepted in respect to the former the criterion of great styles. The European styles appear in the subtitles of particular chapters in connection to the dynasties which ruled Poland in different periods, e.g., "The Romanesque Art in the Times of the Piasts" or "Late Baroque and Rococo under the Saxon Dynasty." That demonstrated the Western orientation of Polish art and its development as parallel to the developments in Europe. The Western orientation was conditioned by the local needs and the initiative of Polish patrons, and favored by both foreign and local artists. Unlike in the case of imports, in both cases the artistic models developed in the West were adapted and modified locally. Under the disguise of the "great styles" which made the Western art universally coherent there were, however, their national varieties, including those which initiated crucial form-generating processes important for the entire continent. The recognition of mutual inspirations by the "center" and "periphery" was at that time one of the major tasks of art history. Thus, Walicki and Starzyński revealed multiple connections of Polish art with the artistic centers of the South and the West, including Bohemia, Italy, the German lands, France, and the Netherlands. The configurations of such connections were believed to contribute to local identities, which was why their acknowledgment depended on the received assumptions about long-time international relations in culture or current political and cultural needs of particular countries. Such motivation significantly inspired historians in the states that appeared on the map of Europe after World War I.¹⁰ It seems, however,

⁹ See e.g., L. Stasiak, *Prawda o Piotrze Vischerze*, Kraków 1910; idem, *Rewindykacje własności naszej*, Kraków 1911; *O narodowości Wita Stwosza. Ród Stwoszków od wodza wojsk polskich z r. 1188 Ottona Stwosza aż po ostatniego z rodu Bogusława Stwosza*, Kraków 1910–1911.

¹⁰ E.g., see an analysis of that question in reference to Czechoslovakia: M. Marek, "Kunstgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Dienst am Staat. Die Tschechoslowakei der Zwischenkriegszeit und ihr Kunsterbe," in: *Grenzen überwindend. Festschrift für Adam*

that the system of the dependence of Polish art on the West was not dictated by the postwar political alliances or prejudices and traumas from the times of partitions. If such prejudices had mattered, they might have made Polish art historians underestimate German artistic influences on Polish art in favor of the Romance countries. In fact, anti-German sentiments surfaced in the book several times, e.g., when Walicki rather reluctantly accepted the German origin of Wit Stwosz, but the artist's national identity in late medieval period was, as it will soon become clear, fundamental for the essentialist approach to art.¹¹ On the other hand, the study presents an objective account of the art in the state of the Teutonic Knights (on the territory which belonged to Poland since 1918) or the contribution of the neighboring country in the west to Polish painting of the 15th century. The situation in the 1930s was dynamic – there was a difference between 1934 and late 1938 – still, the Polish scholarly discourse contrasted with the condescending and sometimes even aggressive tone of the German “*Ostforschung*” historiography.¹²

S. Labuda, eds. K. Bernhardt, P. Piotrowski, Berlin 2006, pp. 79–97. Discussions of that kind occurred also in reference to major centers of European art, e.g., the Renaissance in France as a phenomenon dependent or independent of the art of Italy. See M. Passini, *La Fabrique de l'art national. Le nationalisme et les origines de l'histoire de l'art en France et en Allemagne 1870–1933*, Paris 2012, p. 9ff.

¹¹ On Wit Stwosz, see Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 1004 (108).

¹² The aspects of a polemic with Germany in Walicki's studies have been stressed by T. Zadrożny, “Polska sztuka dawna z perspektywy 1939 roku,” in: *Wystawa nowojorska 1939. Materiały z sesji naukowej Instytutu Sztuki PAN, Warszawa, 23–24 listopada 2009 roku*, ed. J. M. Sosnowska, Warszawa 2012, pp. 105–117. A different situation before 1939 was illustrated by a controversy of Mieczysław Gębarowicz with Pierre Francastel. The latter emphasized the role of Western, particularly French, stimuli in Polish art, diminishing the importance of German ones, emphasized by Walicki in his study of the fifteenth-century painting in France, published with an introduction by Francastel, who was the director of the *Institut Français* in Warsaw, see footnote 18 below. Gębarowicz defended Walicki's opinions (M. Gębarowicz, « La peinture polonaise à l'époque des Jagellons » *La France et la Pologne dans leurs relations artistiques, Annuaire historique édité par Bibliothèque Polonaise de Paris* 1939, 1(4), pp. 355–365). His critique of Polish scholars dealing with the European relations of Polish art and stressing, allegedly too much, its dependence on Germany Francastel developed in his book *L'histoire de l'art, instrument de la propagande germanique*, Paris 1945. See a review by Ksawery Piwocki, who argued that the French scholar was more critical of Polish art history than of German nationalist art historians (*Biuletyn Historii Sztuki i Kultury* 1948, 10(1), pp. 68–84, here p. 76). The question of the reconstruction of foreign influences on Polish art was strongly politicized after World War II. See A. S. Labuda, “Polska historia sztuki i ‘Ziemie Odzyskane,’” in: idem, *Z dziejów historii sztuki. Polska, Niemcy, Europa*, Poznań 2016, pp. 69–104, here p. 101f.

However, the key problem was the following: how was it possible for the basically "Western" Polish art to demonstrate its own, specifically national identity?

In the methodological introduction Walicki and Starzyński express their skepticism in that respect, since unlike in the West, the "history of art in Poland gives much less room to consider its independent, purely artistic development."¹³ It does not include artworks of high value and the course of its development is discontinuous as there is no coherent series of artistic phenomena. The reasons for that were a low level of the local artistic milieu and the decisive role of immigrant artists, which implies that a truly Polish form could be invented only by ethnically Polish artists. Unfortunately, because of their poor skills, the national element could not find a permanent formal expression. The background of that diagnosis was an assumption that in the West the evolution of art had its intrinsic logic on the level of pure form – thanks to a number of highly competent artists, it was possible to work out there a specific formal idiom which expressed the unchangeable national character. To neutralize the weaknesses of the Polish periphery and make it possible to understand the character of Polish art, the authors suggest taking into consideration changing historical, political, and cultural factors which belonged to the sphere of art as such. Consequently, the subtitles of the book's chapters referred to particular royal dynasties. Different variants of Polish art could be approached as the effects of cooperation and contracts between artists and patrons/receivers who represented the Polish element whenever the artist was of a foreign origin.

Did Walicki and Starzyński apply that contextual-historical method coherently? Not really, since, as they wrote, "principally, trying to make a comprehensive overview of artistic phenomena in Poland, we did our best to emphasize those which illustrated Polish ingenuity, though perhaps their quality was not always the highest."¹⁴ As we will see, they made an effort to identify a specifically Polish form according to an interpretive model, quite common in Europe after World War I, which aimed at revealing peculiar ways of expression that reflected, in isolation from external stimuli, the "creative will" of communities such as a nation, a people or a tribe.¹⁵

¹³ Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 911.

¹⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 9.

¹⁵ The question of the relation between art and nation was present already in the nineteenth-century historiography, see, e.g., Hubert Locher i Jan Bakoš quoted above (footnote 2). A way to the analysis of that relation from a strictly formal and visual point of view was paved by the ideas developed around 1900 particularly in the German language art history by Alois Riegl, Heinrich Wölfflin, and August Schmarsow. On the continuation of that approach after World War I, see L. O. Larsson, "Nationalstil und Nationalismus in der Kunstgeschichte der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre," in: *Kategorien und Methoden der deutschen*

However, that duality in methodology caused a split into two narratives: one about the unchanging nation (represented by the “people”) and its art, and the other about the history of changing configurations and artistic expressions co-produced by immigrant artists and Polish upper classes: rulers, magnates, and “Polish nobility.”

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The above considerations were an introduction to the issue defined in the subtitle as “Poland.” Now we will focus on the art of the late Middle Ages in respect to its ability to express national values. According to Walicki, who was the author of that part of the book, in contrast to the earlier periods, it was addressed to a wide and socially mixed audience, including also moderately affluent petty bourgeoisie and gentry. The art of that particular period was for the most part a set of works made in the local workshops in cities and towns by, as it is well documented in the fifteenth-century sources, hundreds of painters and sculptors of different national origin. Walicki found out that in the second half of the 15th century the Cracow guild was “rapidly polonized,”¹⁶ which resulted in the rise of art with specifically Polish national characteristics. The scholar discovered its formal features in a group of works that was a part of a larger and quite diverse domain of Polish painting.¹⁷

Kunstgeschichte 1900–1930, ed. L. Dittmann, Stuttgart 1985, pp. 169–184; H. Locher, “Stilgeschichte und die Frage der ‘nationalen Konstanten,’” *Zeitschrift für Schweizerische Archäologie und Kunstgeschichte* 1996, 53, pp. 285–293; D. Bohde, *Kunstgeschichte als physiognomische Wissenschaft. Kritik einer Denkfigur der 1920er bis 1940er Jahre*, Berlin 2012. See also Th. DaCosta Kaufmann, *Towards Geography of Art*, Chicago and London 2004. On Polish historiography, see M. Leśniakowska, “Polska historia sztuki i nacjonalizm,” in: *Nacjonalizm w sztuce i historii sztuki 1789–1850*, eds. D. Konstantynów, R. Pasieczny, P. Paszkiewicz, Warszawa 1998, pp. 33–59.

¹⁶ Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 998 [102]. One may quote here a characteristic opinion of J. Ptaśnik, *Cracovia Artificum 1300–1500*, Kraków 1917 (*Źródła do historii sztuki i cywilizacji w Polsce*, vol. 4), 5* and 8*:

“The question of a given artist’s nationality matters a lot since only those nations have the right to be included in the family of cultured nations, and only those count in the history of the humankind, which add their national contribution to the cultural heritage of the world. To sum up the achievement of every nation’s civilization, it is necessary to know the nationality of its artists. ... The vernacular Polish art of the Middle Ages was created only by Polish nationals.”

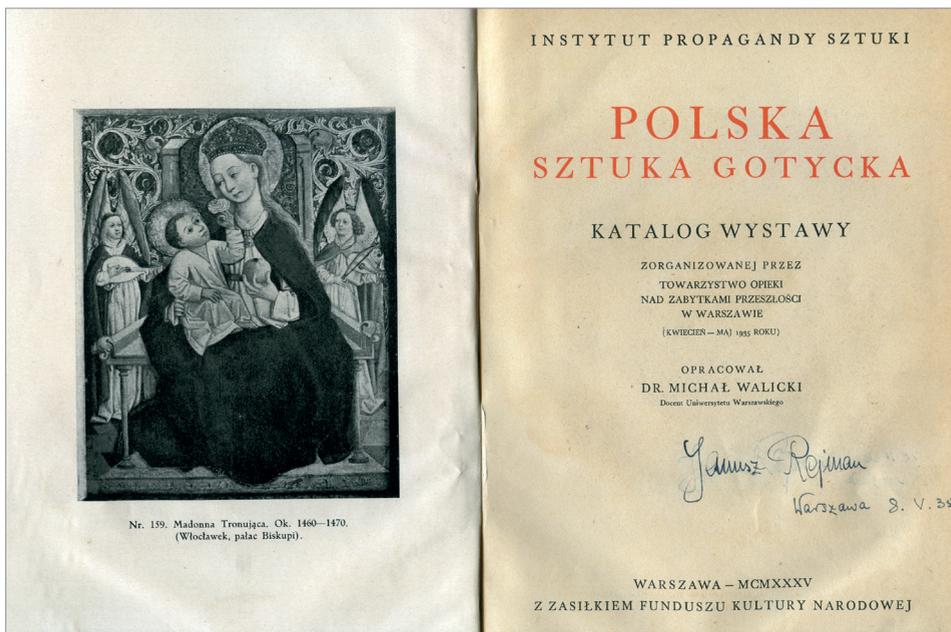
¹⁷ It was probably that diversity which made Walicki drop a relativizing remark that even though his research proved the “development of Polish guild painting in the society of medieval Poland,” it „did not demonstrate distinct national features...” See M. Walicki, “Z badań nad problemem narodowości i rozwojem indywidualizmu w polskim malarstwie gotyckim,” *Życie sztuki* 1934, 1, pp. 67–100, here p. 94.

What did those manifestations of national art – an alleged emanation of the Polish spirit or mentality – actually look like? They were by no means realistic. The Polish psyche was supposed to prefer conservative and idealistic tendencies revealed in the works commissioned by provincial centers, not big cities. One of them was a late fifteenth-century triptych from Szaniec in a village church in Lesser Poland. Its color reproduction is one of two color ones included in the 1250 page study by Hamann, Walicki, and Starzyński. No doubt, it was a proof that the late Middle Ages were a privileged period in the development of Polish art as uniquely Polish (ill. 2, 3). Next to Szaniec, equally programmatic was an exposition of retables and their individual panels at the great exhibition “Polish Gothic Art,” organized in 1935 in Warsaw, with Walicki as its curator (ill. 9, 4, 5)¹⁸ Walicki wrote: “... in Polish art, there were



3. Triptych from the parish church in Szaniec, c. 1490–1500 (lost)

¹⁸ *Polska sztuka gotycka. Katalog wystawy*, ed. M. Walicki, Warszawa 1935. See also idem, “Po wystawie polskiej sztuki gotyckiej w Instytucie Propagandy Sztuki (Organizacja. Przegląd materiału i uzupełnienie. Wyniki Naukowe. Rezonans społeczny),” *Nike* 1938, 1, pp. 51–75 and tabl. 9a and b, 15a i b. The art of the late Middle Ages was an important medium used to create a picture of Polish artistic heritage and demonstrate Polish artistic po-



4. Title page and a frontispiece of *Polska sztuka gotycka catalog*, Warszawa 1935 (photo: A. S. Labuda)



5. Exhibition of Polish gothic art. A view of room no. 2. Warsaw, Instytut Propagandy Sztuki, 1935

few paintings with many figures in them, combined in genre groups" – most of them presented groups of three to four human figures in the central panels of wing retables, "rendered flatly in color against a golden background..." The golden, patterned background was popular in Poland until the 17th century, unlike in Western art where it was an anachronism. "Conservative was also a flat interpretation of form ... avoiding perspective and spatial vibrations. The physical immobility ... of figures corresponded to ... static emotions which limited the range of facial expression. ... A small repertoire of gestures makes a poor equivalent in that respect." "Movements of the hands to a certain extent violate the formal silence of the painting and stress the moment of manifestly arrested motion." "A static composition of the central group corresponds with the rhythmic placement of figures in a row in the side wings – free-standing figures are substitutes of figural groups." In general, then, the overall effect consists "not so much in primitive emotional contact and clumsy three-dimensional expression, but rather in conscious decisions taken according to the logic of the painter's vision, which enhanced the flat and decorative sense of form" based on a number of equal size figures placed in a row.¹⁹

Walicki claimed that a branch of Polish art achieved the status of a vernacular and autogenous product, arguing that in visual and formal terms it proved able to generate a figure of identity which at that time was most highly appreciated. The meaning, significance, and even function of his reconstruction reached far beyond reporting the historical state of affairs. It is interesting that the form of a group of late medieval paintings that he identified corresponded to the artistic idiom of one of the varieties of national style, represented in the 1920s and early 1930s by some artists who belonged to the *Rytm* group.²⁰

tential both at home and abroad. It is significant that Walicki's studies on Polish painting were published in German (M. Walicki, "Stilstufen der gotischen Tafelmalerei in Polen im XV. Jahrhundert. Geschichtliche Grundlagen und formale Systematik," *Sprawozdania z posiedzeń Towarzystwa Naukowego Warszawskiego* (Wydz. 2) 1933, 26(3/6), pp. 61–101) and in French (M. Walicki, *La peinture d'autels et de retables en Pologne au temps des Jagellons. Avec une introduction de Pierre Francastel*, Paris 1937 (Bibliothèque de l'Institut Français de Varsovie). At the same time the *Institut Français* published in the same typographic format Tadeusz Szydłowski's study of the altarpiece from St. Mary's Basilica in Cracow by Wit Stwosz.

¹⁹ The above quotations come from Walicki's study "Z badań nad problemem narodowości," pp. 85–86. In the overview the results of Walicki's research are placed in a comprehensive narrative about Polish guild painting that specifies also its other features and external relations. See Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, 1012f (116 f.), 993f (97f.), 997f (101f) and ill. 1215 (105) and 1245 (135).

²⁰ This correspondence was noticed already by Henryk Anders, who refers to some of Walicki's analyses quoted above. See H. Anders, *Rytm. W poszukiwaniu stylu narodowego*, Warszawa 1972, p. 119f. See also A. Chmielewska, "Charakter narodowy sztuki polskiej

It seems that such a coincidence, which in fact was not one at all, augmented the transhistorical status of the national art's social foundation in an essentialist way, and even referred to more general socio-political and cultural realities of the interwar Poland.

A significant lesson may be drawn from a comparison of the central panel of the Szaniec triptych and a woodcut by Władysław Skoczylas, called "Dancing Robbers" [Taniec zbójników] (ill. 6, 7).²¹ Its flat composition and decorative and



6. Władysław Skoczylas, *Taniec zbójników II*, woodcut, 1922



7. Triptych from the parish church in Szaniec, middle section, c. 1490–1500 (lost)

w dwudziestoleciu międzywojennym. Kontekst polityczny i ideowy," in: *W kręgu Rytmu. Sztuka polska lata dwudziestych*, ed. K. Nowakowska-Sito, Warszawa 2006, pp. 167–182, here p. 177f. On the *Rytm* group, see H. Anders and K. Nowakowska-Sito, *Stowarzyszenie Artystów Polskich Rytm 1922–1932* [Katalog wystawy: Muzeum Narodowe w Warszawie 11 czerwca – 29 lipca 2001], Warszawa 2001; eadem, "Dlaczego Rytm?," in: *W kręgu Rytmu*, pp. 9–29.

²¹ On Władysław Skoczylas, see E. Zawistowska, "Władysław Skoczylas," in: *Stowarzyszenie Artystów Polskich Rytm 1922–1932*, pp. 224–227 and W. Włodarczyk, "Koncepcja

rhythmic elements of form placed on the surface of the graphic picture belong to the vocabulary of Walicki and show up in the contemporary analyses of the artworks by Skoczylas. If there are any doubts caused by an apparent contradiction between the dancing movement of the robbers and the immobile figures in the fifteenth-century paintings, one may quote the following statement of Tadeusz Cieślowski, Jr.: "There is no dynamic in Skoczylas. A pose, a gesture or a move change in the artist's woodcuts into an eternally static decorative value. They evoke a peaceful majesty that is fixed forever. No matter whether it is 'A Robbers' March' [Pochód zbójników] or 'Dancing Robbers,' the vision is always formed once and for all."²² On the other hand, the ordering of the triptychs and retable wings, dominated by single figures in a row, seems to be a transposition of the rhythmic spirit embodied in the marching robbers (ill. 8, 9).



8. Władysław Skoczylas, *Pochód zbójników I*, woodcut, 1915

sztuki narodowej Władysława Skoczylasa," *Zeszyty Naukowe Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie. Numer specjalny: Władysław Skoczylas. Sztuka – Szkoła – Państwo* 1984, 4(10), pp. 7–20; A. Chmielewska, *W służbie państwa, społeczeństwa i narodu. "Państwowotwórczy" artyści plastycy w Rzeczypospolitej*, Warszawa 2006, p. 198ff.

²² T. Cieślowski, Jr., *Władysław Skoczylas*, Warszawa 1934, p. 31, qtd. from: K. Nowakowska-Sito, "W poszukiwaniu stylu Rytmu," in: *Stowarzyszenie Artystów Polski "Rytm" 1922–1932* [Katalog wystawy w Muzeum Narodowym w Warszawie 11 czerwca – 29 lipca 2001], pp. 54–88, here p. 73.

It is hard to decide whether Walicki was inspired by contemporary art or established the Polish canon regardless of the art of the *Rytm* and Skoczylas. Suffice to say that in his overview, he revealed the historical roots of contemporary art and provided historical evidence of the Polish sense of form articulated in his times. As a result, the national artistic identity acquired a transhistorical status. On the other hand, the perspective of the *Rytm* and Skoczylas, i.e. national art either rooted in or referring to the vernacular and eternal culture of the Polish people and their specific will to form, allows one to see in Walicki's interpretation a prominent social factor.²³ He never used the term "people" or "folk," but argued, discussing the problem of national



9. Exhibition of Polish gothic art. A view of the main room. Warsaw, Instytut Propagandy Sztuki, 1935

²³ On the folklore sources of the *Rytm* and the works of Skoczylas, see literature quoted in footnotes 20–21. It should be noted that in Skoczylas' theoretical statements (as well as those of some other "state supportive" artists from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts), the folk inspiration was not supposed to be limited to ethnically Polish folklore only. See A. Chmielewska, "Styl Narodowy w Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej: artyści a wizerunek państwa," in: *Naród, Styl, Modernizm*, eds. J. Purchla, W. Tegethoff, Kraków–Munich 2006, pp. 189–199, here p. 197; eadem, "Charakter narodowy sztuki polskiej w dwudziestolecu międzywojennym," p. 179f.; W. Włodarczyk, "Niepodległość i nowoczesność," in: *Sztuka wszędzie. Akademia Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie 1904–1944* [Katalog wystawy], eds.

identity, that the late medieval art was produced by craftsmen who lived in towns for the local population and the gentry that lived in the country as "Polish" painting. That was not a literally socio-political argument, but still the connection of art to lower classes made it seem democratic and egalitarian.²⁴ The people and folk appeared explicitly in the context of Polish art of the baroque. Starzyński, who was the author of that part of the book, looking for his equivalents of Walicki's claims in accordance with his method, found a continuation of the Polish-guild late gothic formula in the modest yet vernacular, autogenous and semi-folk art. What is more, he defined that kind of art in opposition to the art of the court, perhaps not Polish enough since it was produced by artists of mostly foreign origin, who worked for their patrons.²⁵ The court art actually determined the general picture of art in Poland, which was persuasively demonstrated by Starzyński. These observations reveal inconsistency in the application of methodologies. The reader should not be misled by the fact that right after his remarks about the "vernacular," Starzyński passed on to another variety of the local, the Sarmatian one, which he described just as convincingly, listing as its components the palace, the painting, the costume, and almost the whole theater of behavior in the times of King Jan III Sobieski.²⁶ Still, the Sarmatian variant

J. Gola, M. Sitkowska, A. Szewczyk, Warszawa 2012, pp. 40–55, here p. 47. Folklore inspirations in Polish painting are presented in I. Luba, *Dialog nowoczesności z tradycją. Malarstwo polskie dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*, Warszawa 2004.

²⁴ "[T]he specificity of that painting [of the late medieval guilds in Poland] did not yet show outstanding national features but, owing most of its formal inspirations to the art of the neighboring countries, in the first place to various German and Czech influences, found its place in the socio-cultural structure of Poland in those times, in a sense representing the democratic-bourgeois urban culture [emphasis – A. S. L.] of the Jagiellonian era." Walicki, "Z badań nad problemem narodowości," p. 94.

²⁵ "Realizing such an enormous number of foreign names, which we must list even in our brief outline, the overwhelmed reader may ask if in the first half of the 17th century there were no outstanding artists who were Polish. Fortunately, current research in progress sheds more and more light on the active Polish element. Due to the dominant eclecticism and many tendencies present in the official and court art., we will search for more independent art in more modest production of the guilds with its strong connection to the vernacular tradition." It was the "bourgeois milieu of the guild art" that continued the late gothic traditions. A good example was the art of Krzysztof Boguszewski who demonstrated a "strong tendency to linear stylization and strict symmetry, so different from the spirit of the baroque." Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 1071f. (p. 175f.), see also p. 1061f. (p. 165f.).

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 110ff. (p. 209ff.): Chapter III: The baroque in its full bloom during the reign of Jan III.

was culturally and historically remote, “there and then,” the property of the nobility and not the people defined in modern terms.

Consequently, Walicki and Starzyński’s overview presents two roots of Polish art: its two systems of production and reception, which were isolated from each other, on the one hand close to the socio-political elite, on the other, controlled by the socio-political margin of the petty gentry and bourgeoisie. Starzyński, aware of the context of the democratic twentieth-century Poland, argued that the duality was abolished in the epoch of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, a patron, art collector, and organizer of artistic life which was supposed to serve the whole Polish society.²⁷ According to Starzyński, the King’s patronage had a “social and pedagogic function,” which was a reference to the pedagogy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, but it also sounds as a twentieth-century state-building rhetoric. In fact, the most outstanding expert on the topic in those times, Tadeusz Mańkowski, approached it in the same way. In his opinion, the patronage of Stanisław August differed from that of his predecessors, Zygmunt August, Zygmunt III Vasa, and Jan III Sobieski, due to its “social” address since the “baroque patronage [was supposed] to augment the glory of the monarch’s court and represent the king as the embodiment of the state.”²⁸ On the contrary, King Stanisław August Poniatowski represented a “different” state that cared about the cultural enlightenment of its citizens. Even though the last king of Poland had a cosmopolitan, French-aristocratic, and elitist habitus, his activities could be interpreted as guidelines for new Poland.²⁹ Choosing another option, Walicki found the legitimation of the egalitarian and democratic Poland between the world wars already in the late Middle Ages – that idea was well grounded in the study of the period in the West, particularly in contemporary France.³⁰ Perhaps what it implied was a critique of the Poland of nobility that collapsed due to the lack of social balance between the privileged nobles and the marginalized bourgeoisie and peasantry. Such an opinion was expressed by historians and one art historian, Mieczysław Gębarowicz. Unlike Walicki, Gębarowicz did not appreciate the formalism and idealism of the Polish late gothic art but noticed its ability to

²⁷ Ibidem, p. 1105ff. (p. 209ff.): Chapter V: The epoch and style of Stanisław August.

²⁸ T. Mańkowski, “Mecenat Stanisława Augusta,” *Życie Sztuki* 1934, 1, pp. 157–167, here p. 157.

²⁹ On another approach to Stanisław August Poniatowski in Poland between the world wars, see E. Manikowska, “Materialna historiografia sztuki. Wokół książki *Galerja Stanisława Augusta* Tadeusza Mańkowskiego,” *Biuletyn Historii Sztuki* 2013, 75(3), pp. 505–535.

³⁰ A. Thomine-Berrada, F.-R. Martin, “Styles et nation en France autour de 1900. Le Moyen âge comme origine en architecture et en historiographie,” in: *Nation, style, modernism*, eds. J. Purchla, W. Tegethoff, Cracow–Munich 2006, pp. 37–54, here 39ff.; Passini, *La Fabrique de l’art national*, p. 89.

represent the world, i.e. its naturalistic variant related to the rationalism of the Western type of the bourgeoisie, hardly present in the history of Poland, which negatively determined her future.³¹

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My next point is the problem of the “Eastern” art or, more precisely, the art of the Orthodox Christianity that developed in the eastern parts of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It has been often assumed that those territories were a typical borderland with its various hybrid cultures having their specific ethnic and religious background. However, if one takes such a point of view, what is missed is the fact that the Commonwealth was a unified state of two or even three nations whose representatives were first citizens and only then Poles, Ruthenians, and Lithuanians – members of some particular religious denomination.³² And yet, Walicki and Starzyński’s overview favors the idea of the artistic borderland, which was the result of a one-sided, Polish-national approach (with the Western “center” in reserve) to the Eastern Orthodox art and architecture. The main instrument of research was in that case formalist art history, with some attempts to take into consideration also the history of culture.

The problem of the heritage of the Christian Orthodox Church appeared already, in an anachronistic way conditioned by the eastern borders of the interwar Poland, in the chapter concerning the Romanesque epoch of the Piasts. From the 14th century on, the anachronisms started disappearing. Walicki discussed the Ruthenian-Byzantine wall paintings founded by King Władysław Jagiełło for catholic churches and chapels in Poland, while Starzyński focused on the orthodox church architecture of early modern times. It was a rather surprising and perhaps significant decision to include a number of local orthodox icons in the catalog added to the 1934 edition of their study, which lists works of art from abroad in the holdings located in Poland.³³ Thus, no wonder that

³¹ M. Gębarowicz, “Wschód i Zachód w sztuce polskiej,” *Sprawozdania Towarzystwa Naukowego we Lwowie* 1935, 15(2), pp. 146–153, here p. 148, 151ff.; idem, *Sztuka średniowieczna*, Lwów 1934 (*Historia sztuki*, t. 2), p. 399, 415.

³² On those distinctions, see A. Sulima-Kamiński, *Historia Rzeczypospolitej wielu narodów 1505–1795*, Lublin 2000, p. 10ff. Sulima-Kamiński’s argument has been quoted by R. Stobiecki, “Najnowsze syntezy dziejów Polski i Ukrainy. Próba porównania,” in: *Historia, mentalność, tożsamość. Miejsce i rola historii oraz historyków w życiu narodu polskiego i ukraińskiego w XIX i XX wieku*, eds. J. Pisulińska, P. Sierżęga, L. Zaszkiłniak, Rzeszów 2008, pp. 557–573, here pp. 560–561. Sulima-Kamiński remarks that “since the 16th century, the word ‘Pole’ ... could mean both an ethnic Pole, and a citizen of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, regardless of his or her ethnicity.”

³³ Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 1198f.

the main text includes no information about paintings and wooden sculpture made for those churches. Consequently, the authors' attitude toward the Ruthenian Orthodox art is ambivalent: sometimes it is considered as an element of Polish art, while on other occasions it remains alien and as such cannot be taken into account.

The key to the discourse on the Eastern Orthodox art is Westernization. The process of the Westernization or Latinization of the Orthodox art and architecture is taken for granted as a historical fact. As Piotr Krasny has noticed, the "Western" ("Occidental") criterion became for some orthodox churches a "kind of 'pass' to the canon of the main historical monuments of Polish art" as well as a pretext to reduce their analysis contrary to their multicultural characteristics.³⁴ A good example of that approach is the Greek Catholic (Uniate) St. George's cathedral in Lviv, built in 1744–1772 by Bernard Meretyn, an architect of German origin. Wrote Starzyński: "[In Meretyn's work] the tendencies characteristic of southern Germany overlapped with the influence of late Roman baroque ... The church's plan demonstrates a reference to Italian plans based on the Greek cross. ... The central design was well adapted to the needs of Eastern liturgy, although [in St. George's cathedral] the elongated nave evidently demonstrates the triumph of the Western artistic idea."³⁵ Hence, the cathedral's architecture became a space of conflict of contrasted forms and the historical, in fact foundational, Orthodox element was excluded from the domain of the West-Occident.³⁶

Let us return to the foundation of King Władysław Jagiełło, which was original and unique on the ethnically Polish, Latin-Occidental territory of Poland. It is definitely different from the gothic painting which was dominant there. The Lublin Holy Trinity church decoration was analyzed in detail by Walicki himself and by Celina Filipowicz-Osieczkowska.³⁷ In the Byzantine-Eastern work both scholars revealed some Latin-Occidental elements; particularly in iconography

³⁴ P. Krasny, *Architektura cerkiewna na ziemiach ruskich Rzeczypospolitej 1596–1914*, Kraków 2003, p. 13, see also p. 31ff.

³⁵ Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 1096 (200).

³⁶ Krasny proposes the term "modernization" to refer to St. George's cathedral, thus rejecting the concept of "Westernization." See Krasny, *Architektura cerkiewna na ziemiach...*, p. 158.

³⁷ M. Walicki, "Malowidła ścienne kościoła św. Trójcy na Zamku w Lublinie (1418)", *Studia do dziejów sztuki w Polsce* 1930, 2; C. Filipowicz-Osieczkowska, "Ze studiów nad szkołą polską malarstwa bizantyjskiego," *Życie Sztuki* 1934, 1, pp. 101–136; eadem, "Les peintures byzantines de Lublin," *Byzantion* 1932, 7, fasc. 1.; pp. 241–252; eadem, *Ze studiów nad szkołą polską malarstwa bizantyjskiego – Notes sur la Majestas Domini et sur l'école polonaise de la peinture byzantine*, Kraków 1936.

and sometimes also in the style of the paintings. Walicki wrote: "The Catholic theological thought was formally expressed through Byzantine art. ... What is more, the painter of the Passion scenes ... strongly reacted to contemporary trends in gothic art, which can be seen in the 'Communion of the Apostles,' referring both in its iconography and stylistic details to the models of western European painting."³⁸ On another occasion, he claimed that next to close cultural relations of Poland and Ruthenia, another factor that favored the infiltration by "foreign" art [Walicki's term] was a "peculiar consanguinity of that art in whose forms one could hear the quiet melody of the gothic line and gothic reality, which brings to mind Worringer's words that 'only in the so-called *maniera greca* the gothic will for form could achieve its expression."³⁹ Filipowicz-Osieczkowska made an explicit statement that there must have been a Polish school of the Byzantine painting. However, such views did not pass the test of criticism, which makes their bias even more characteristic of the Polish studies of the Byzantine-Orthodox art in Poland.⁴⁰

In fact, the term "Westernization," both classifying and evaluative, was a trope of polonization in the ethnic-national sense, i.e. the appropriation of whatever could be polonized by including it in the Western (Occidental) repertoire of forms. Poland was considered a mediator or perhaps even a missionary of the Western models. If we assume that the art of the Teutonic Knights, who once had their state on the territory of the Polish Republic as it came into being in 1918, included by Walicki and Starzyński in Polish artistic heritage, could be interpreted as a figure of the West, the negligence of the Eastern-Orthodox element in the cultural reality of Poland before the partitions becomes even more striking. The postulate of taking into consideration a wide historical context, formulated in the introduction to their overview, in the case of the Eastern Orthodox art took two different directions: on the one hand, it was applied to King Władysław Jagiełło's foundations as Catholic, which was not true, on the other, it did not apply to art and architecture located outside the "vernacular" Latin territory of Poland.

³⁸ Walicki, Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, p. 987 (91).

³⁹ M. Walicki, "Wschód i Zachód w sztuce Rusi Czerwieńskiej (Uwagi na marginesie Wystawy Sztuki Ukraińskiej w Warszawie)," *Pion. Tygodnik Literacko-Społeczny* 1934, 9(22), pp. 1–2, here p. 2. Most likely, Walicki makes here a reference to Wilhelm Worringer's *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1911) *Griechentum und Gotik. Vom Weltreich des Hellenismus* (1928).

⁴⁰ A. Różycka-Bryzek, "Malarstwo cerkiewne w polskiej tradycji historycznej i w badaniach naukowych," in: *Sztuka cerkiewna w diecezji przemyskiej. Materiały z międzynarodowej konferencji naukowej 25–26 marca 1995 roku*, eds. J. Gienza, A. Stepan, Łańcut 1999, pp. 11–26, here p. 19ff.

Drawing far-reaching conclusions from the above-mentioned inconsistency does not seem to be quite appropriate under the circumstances. Who in the 1930s was ready to abandon the narrow, national model of history and take into consideration the "citizens of the Polish Republic" instead of members of the anachronistically and antagonistically defined national or ethnic groups? Poland just regained its independence after the trauma of partitions, and the Orthodox Church was mostly remembered there as an instrument of russification. The tension between Ukrainians, who developed their national aspirations, and Poles, who had the memories of their past glory, began in the 19th century and under the Hapsburg rule it was both stimulated and diminished, depending on the imperial politics. Still, Marian Sokołowski, who studied the Ruthenian art already then, declared that it was quite alien to the heritage of Poland.⁴¹

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The scholarly and historical value of Walicki and Starzyński's book consists in their thorough search for the Polish features of the art made in Poland. The above analysis of their considerations on that subject is by no means complete. There are several reasons for this, one of them being emphasis on the formal and stylistic approach to the work of art, placed in a "national" context. A historical or historico-cultural approach, called between the world wars "sociological," deserves a separate study. A way to understand better the achievement of the two scholars would be to discuss it in a wide comparative perspective, both as regards the substance and the method, including Polish specialist and non-specialist literature, as well as the artistic historiography of the entire Europe. In particular it would be necessary to take into account the historiography of Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, and Ukraine, involved in heated polemics with the Polish point of view, and following similar paths of interpretation.⁴²

⁴¹ See M. Kunińska, *Historia sztuki Mariana Sokołowskiego*, Kraków 2014, p. 226ff. See also M. Rampley, *The Vienna School of Art History. Empire and the Politics of Scholarship, 1847–1918*, University Park 2013, p. 89ff.

⁴² See Marek, "Kunstgeschichte zwischen Wissenschaft und Dienst...;" M. Filipová, "Between East and West: The Vienna School and the Idea of Czechoslovak Art," *Journal of Art Historiography* 2013, 8; eadem, "The Construction of National Identity in Czech Art History," *Centropa* 2008, 8(3), pp. 257–271; L. Laučkaitė, "Writing Lithuanian Art History in the First Half of the Twentieth Century; Strategies of National Identity," *Centropa* 2008, 8(3), pp. 272–280. See also K. Kodres, "Two Art Histories: The (Baltic) German and Estonian Versions of the History of Estonian Art," in: *History of Art History in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*, ed. J. Malinowski, Toruń

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2012, pp. 67–72; J. Vybíral, "What Is 'Czech' in Art in Bohemia? Alfred Woltmann and Defensive Mechanisms of Czech Artistic Historiography," *Kunstchronik* 2006, 59(1), pp. 1–7. As regards the history of Ukrainian art, it is hard to find similar studies. The weak point of the following biographical studies is their apologetic character: T. Stefanyszyn, "Ukrainian Art Studies of Lwow/Lviv in the 1920s–1930s: Personalities, Works, Tendencies," in: *History of Art History in Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe*, pp. 41–48; L. Sokolyuk, "Dmytro Antonovych's general conception of Ukrainian art history and its significance for modern teaching system," *ibidem*, pp. 49–53. The following studies have made valuable contributions to the considered questions: M. P. Kruk, "Sztuka własna i obca. Na marginesie badań nad zachodnioruskim malarstwem ikonowym," in: *Byzantina Europaea. Księga Jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Waldemarowi Czeranowi*, eds. M. Kokoszko, M. J. Leszka, Łódź 2007, pp. 327–343; *idem*, "Stan badań nad zachodnioruskim malarstwem ikonowym XV–XVI wieku," in: *Sztuka Kresów Wschodnich*, ed. J. K. Ostrowski, Kraków 1996, pp. 29–55. Finally, one must also mention a large number of relevant postcolonial studies written by anthropologists, theorists of culture, historians, and literary scholars.

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- Il. 3 – according to M. Walicki i J. Starzyński, *Dzieje sztuki polskiej*, Warszawa 1936
- Il. 5, 9 – according to M. Walicki, "Po wystawie polskiej sztuki gotyckiej w Instytucie Propagandy Sztuki (Organizacja. Przegląd materiału i uzupełnienie. Wyniki naukowe. Rezonans społeczny)," *Nike* 1938, 1, pp. 51–75, table 9a, 15b
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A HISTORY OF POLISH ART

BY MICHAŁ WALICKI AND JULIUSZ STARZYŃSKI

IN POLAND BETWEEN THE WORLD WARS.

THE WEST, POLAND, THE EAST

Summary

Writing an academic history of Polish art was an urgent task of art historians after World War I, when the country regained its political independence. An important and creditable achievement in that respect was a study by Michał Walicki and

Juliusz Starzyński, published in 1934 as a kind of supplement to the monumental *Geschichte der Kunst von der altchristlichen Zeit bis zur Gegenwart* by the Marburg historian Richard Hamann, translated at that time into Polish. In 1936, the work of the Polish scholars was published again in the form of a separate book. The paper focuses on three problems that were addressed in it: the cultural and artistic ties of Poland to the West, the vernacular features of Polish art, and the presence of the "Eastern art" in Polish artistic heritage. The author examines also the question whether those issues were related to the political, social, and cultural reality of the Second Polish Republic.

Keywords:

history of art history, overview of the history of Polish art, national art, transhistorical status of a national artistic form, center and periphery