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## **ART NOUVEAU IN POLAND: ARCHITECTURE, CONSTRUCTIONS, DECORATIONS**

### **Abstract**

The beginning of the 20th century architecture in Poland was characterized by abundance of styles, various construction solutions and the use of diverse materials and decorations. The traditional wooden construction style developed in the 19th century in Zakopane, a city in the region of the Polish Tatra Mountains. In many Polish cities (Cracow, Wrocław, Kazimierz) one can find numerous wooden and brick villas. Mainly in the cities located within the territory of Austria-Hungary (e.g. Cracow) many original Art Nouveau tenement houses built from bricks and decorated with interesting ornaments, as well as many other buildings with richly decorated facades with plaster, mosaics, and interior decorations (e.g. staircases with iron handrails) are preserved.

In Wrocław one can find plenty of structures built in a typical German architectural style. Majority of them have wall coverings made of typical materials of the era, many of which are no longer produced (glazed slate, iron construction elements, fences, handrails and gratings). That is the reason why nowadays modern substitute materials are often used for the restoration. Traditional craftsmen do not exist anymore and small workshops producing materials necessary for the restoration of these structures disappeared.

This article will focus on some representative examples of Polish architecture of the early 20th century, mainly on their construction technique and decorative materials

### **Introduction**

The beginning of Art Nouveau in Poland goes back to the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries when the land of actual Poland was divided among three powers: Prussia, Austria (Galicia), and Russia, which had different systems of administration and also different attitude to Polish people and their culture. In such circumstances also artists from different annexed territories had different perception of new tendencies in art and the role of art in general. Despite the differences also common features of Polish “flowing line” building style were manifested at the very beginning. Art Nouveau in architecture was never the leading style of architecture, but only a minor trend parallel to historicism and eclecticism. (Dobrowolski, 1974). Architects used it primarily for decorating façades and interiors and not in the construction. One of few attempts to use modern technologies in architecture was the Old Theater (*Teatr Stary*) in Cracow, while the majority of art nouveau buildings were built traditionally –mainly from brick and stone.

Art Nouveau was supposed to bring the revival of arts. It rejected everything that could be connected with the past. In Poland art nouveau was understood as a search for a new style but founded on national roots. The decorations copied from Polish highlanders from Zakopane, the Hutsuls, and some elements of Polish vernacular Gothic and Renaissance were used as often as some motifs from fauna and flora.

### **The influence of folk art on Polish Art Nouveau**

#### ***The Zakopane style***

At the end of the 19th century Polish architecture demonstrated the common wish to break away from academism. After 1890, the eclectic historicism and classicism were still present in architecture. It was only in between 1900-1910 that Art Nouveau became the prevailing style in art, also in architecture.  
[www.artnouveau-net.eu](http://www.artnouveau-net.eu)

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After 1910, more simplified forms appeared which gave free way to the emergence of modernism. In art nouveau Polish architecture one can recognize English, Belgian, German and Austrian influences, which were introduced by Polish architects, who at that time studied in many European academic



1. Zakopane, Villa 'Pod Jedlami' (1896-1897), Koziniec 1 (photo: Elzbieta Przesmycka).

centers – Vienna, Paris, Petersburg, Lviv, Prague or Munich. Most of them started their professional work during academism, creating their works at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries and only in later period adopted art nouveau. The historical and eclectic style existed parallel to art nouveau, which was very much inspired by Polish folk art, especially wooden architecture in the Podhale region, Szybisty (2007)

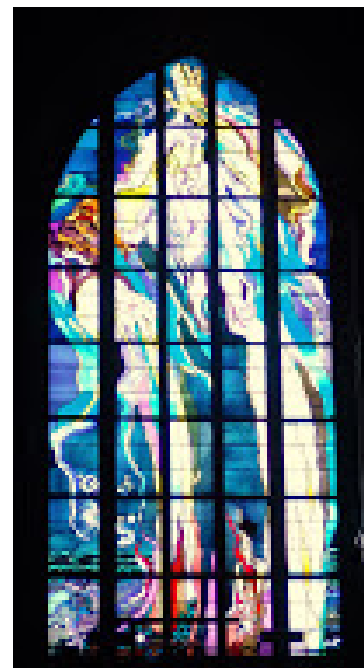
The influence of folk art is clearly manifested in many places, especially in the Podhale region. In the 1890s the folk art was largely promoted by Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851-1915) and Edgar Kovats (1849-1912), both very much interested in highland ornaments and forms of construction of cottages in the Podhale region.

Stanisław Witkiewicz – painter, writer, and social activist graduated from the Academy of Fine Arts in Petersburg and in Munich. He created the new ideas of national style which fascinated many architects. Villa "Pod Jedlami" (1896-97) built for Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski in Zakopane (popular holiday resort in the mountains) contributed very much to the popularity of that style and its expansion to other wooden and masonry buildings (Tondos 2009).

The Zakopane style which combines folk motifs with the European trends in art nouveau was created and spread by the Society of Applied Art (*Towarzystwo Sztuki Stosowanej*) which was established in Cracow. This style is characteristic for many buildings in old Galicia. From there it was spread all over Poland. Many buildings, churches, railroad stations and villas imitated the Zakopane style. Decorative elements copying highland folk art are evident especially in the forms of wooden ornaments. They were used also in stylized stone gables of townhouses in Cracow before 1912, while crystal decorations were often applied on entrance portals of townhouses from later modernism.

Stanisław Wyspiański played the major role in the development of Polish Art Nouveau as painter, poet, graphic artist, architect and designer (1869-1907). His stained-glass windows in the Franciscan Church in Cracow decorated with polychrome flowery, heraldic, and geometrical motifs inspired many designers of that period. (Tomczyk-Maryon, 2009).

The most important representative of Zakopane style was Jan Koszyc Witkiewicz (1882-1958), architect and the conservation officer.



2. Stanisław Wyspiański, stained-glass window God the Father (*Stać się*), the Franciscan Church, Cracow

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He studied at the Institute of Technology (*Instytut Politechniczny*) in Warsaw and later in Munich. In 1904, he was granted the diploma of engineer architect and returned to Warsaw. Together with his paternal uncle St. Witkiewicz he designed several buildings in Zakopane, in 1904-1905 also Villa Witkiewiczówka. In 1905 he was invited by Stefan Żeromski to work in a new health resort –



**3. The School of the Society of Folk Industry Support (*Szkoła Towarzystwa Popierania Przemysłu Ludowego*) 1910-1911, Nałęczów, Chmielewskiego St. (photo: Elżbieta Przesmycka).**

Nałęczów where he built a summer house called *Chata* and an orphanage (*Ochronka*) for children, many villas, a chapel and the School of Building Crafts (*Szkoła Rzemiosł Budowlanych*) in Zakopane style. In 1919, he moved to nearby Kazimierz Dolny by the Wisła River, a popular town among artists and architects and favorite place of intellectual milieu of Warsaw. The first architects settled down in Kazimierz at the beginning of the 20th century and before World War II also members of the Society for the Protection of Historic Monuments (*Towarzystwo Opieki nad Zabytkami Przeszłości*) moved there. Witkiewicz helped to rebuild the city, which was destroyed by the Austrian army in 1915. There he built the School of Industry (*Szkoła Przemysłowa*) partly with his own funds and partly with financial assistance of the Swiss Red Cross. He used traditional local building materials, limestone combined with brick and wood. He also built several villas and Municipal Baths (*Łaźnie Miejskie*) in Kazimierz.

Jan Koszczyc Witkiewicz created a new architecture, skilfully combining national trends of the Zakopane style with the rationalism of early modernism, using traditional local technologies and building materials. (Leśniakowska, 1998)

### Art Nouveau in Galicia

#### *The architecture of the beginning of the 20th century in Cracow*

Similarly to other European countries, in architecture of early 20th century in Poland diverse architectural forms appeared in interior décor as well as in external ornamentation. The majority of art nouveau buildings were private tenement houses, office buildings and social and cultural institutions, built usually from public donations.

Apart from Lviv, Cracow was the main cultural centre in of Galizia, the Austrian part of Polish land. Many brilliant artists worked there, including architects, such as Teodor Talowski, Sławomir Odrzywolski, Ekielski and Zawiejski from the older generation of architects and Franciszek Mączyński, Tadeusz Stryjeński, Józef Czajkowski from the younger generation, Gutowski and Gutowski, (2001).

Teodor Talowski (1857-1910) is considered to be among the most interesting architects at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. His works express eclectic historicism combined with Art Nouveau. Talowski studied in Vienna and later in Lviv, where he graduated in architecture. From 1881 he began teaching at [www.artnouveau-net.eu](http://www.artnouveau-net.eu)



**4. Townhouses at Retoryka St. in Cracow(photo: Elżbieta Przesmycka).**



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the Higher School of Technology and Industry (*Wyższa Szkoła Techniczno-Przemysłowa*) in Cracow, in 1885 he obtained a position of professor. In 1901 he became the head of the department of drawing at the Technical University of Lviv (*Politechnika Lwowska*) and later the head of the department of composition of medieval architecture. Talowski designed many townhouses, churches, and public buildings. His architecture is characterized by irregular plans, asymmetrical facades, decorative inscriptions and original fantastic details. His buildings were constructed in brick combined with carved stone and plaster; he used special irregular bricks (dark with ceramic boles and burrs) manufactured in his own brickyard.



**5. Old Theater (*Teatr Stary*) in Cracow, Szczepański Square, facade details, (photo: Elzbieta Przesmycka).**

Tadeusz Stryjeński (1849-1943), studied architecture in Zurich and later he graduated at Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris. In 1874-1877, he worked as government architect in Lima, Peru. In 1879, he founded a design and construction company in Cracow. He was the first architect in Poland to use reinforced concrete structures. He was the author and co-author of many buildings in Cracow. Together with Franciszek Mączyński, he designed the project for renovation of Old Theater (*Teatr Stary*) in Cracow in 1905 (Lameński, 1991).

Franciszek Mączyński (1874-1947) studied at the Higher School of Industry (*Wyższa Szkoła Przemysłowa*) of the Academy of Fine Arts (*ASP*) in Cracow and later in Vienna and Paris. In 1901 he designed the building of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych*). The building was decorated with flat allegorical friezes by the painter Jacek Malczewski, presenting motifs of laurels, Pegasus's, prickly roses, irises, and peacocks typical of Art Nouveau in Cracow.



**6. The detail of the building of the Society of the Friends of Fine Arts (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych*) (1901) in Cracow, Szczepański Square (photo: Elzbieta Przesmycka).**

Franciszek Mączyński and Tadeusz Stryjeński designed *Dom Pod Globusem* in Cracow (1904-1906), located at the junction of Długa and Basztowa Streets for the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (*Izba Handlowo-Przemysłowa*) (Beiersdorf and Purchla, 1997). The two-storied brick building with a corner clock tower crowned with a helm and a metal globe is an example of early modern architecture (*Dom Pod Globusem* in Cracow, 1904-1906). The entrance portal from Długa St. was decorated by Konstanty Laszczka with allegorical low reliefs depicting Commerce and Industry. The house has a forged metal gate with oak tree leaf ornaments and a copper sailboat with the Chamber of Commerce and Industry symbol on top of the facade. The hall and the staircase are decorated with stucco, forged metal decorations and stained glass.

The architect Sławomir Odrzywolski designed the House of the Technical Society (*Dom Towarzystwa Technicznego*) with white façade bricks, low reliefs by Jan Reszka and mosaics from 1905. The house is being restored at present. Odrzywolski also designed the building of the Society of Agriculture (*Towarzystwo Rolnicze*, 1909) located at Szczepański Square. The monumental façade, divided vertically in convex projections, decorated with sculptures, presenting the figures of farmers. In 1912 Odrzywolski designed the building of the School of Industry (*Szkoła Przemysłowa*) made of brick with stone decorations.

Franciszek Mączyński with Tadeusz Stryjeński and Józef Czajkowski designed the building of the Museum of Technology and Industry (*Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowe*) at Smoleńsk (1909-1914). Simple forms of façades covered with white porous travertine and large glass windows already foreshadow the advance of functionalism. Wooden joinery and forged metal elements allude to the Zakopane style, while the decorated portal and bas-reliefs show Art Deco features (Purchla,1997).

### ***The architecture of villas in Galicia***

At the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, many buildings with Art Nouveau features were constructed in Galicia, mainly in Lviv, Rzeszów, Przemyśl, Jarosław etc. Among the most renowned architects designing in Rzeszów was Tadeusz Mateusz Tekielski (1868-1917). He studied architecture at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the State School of Industry (*C. K. Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłowa*) in Cracow. In 1896, he started to work as an architect in Tarnopol (Tondos,1997).

In Rzeszów, he designed the villa for doctor Włodzimierz Piliński (1898-1899) and on the adjacent plot he built his own villa. Both are good examples of the popular residential architecture combining the national Zakopane style with the architecture of boarding houses, which were typical for many health resorts and for suburbs of major cities, Tondos (1997).

The single story villa designed for doctor Piliński has a steep roof standing on a wooden roof truss. Sculptural elements support the eaves and half-timbered attic, alluding to the popular architecture in the Hutsul land. The front façade is decorated with a large semi circularly topped window.



**7. Rzeszów, villas at Kasztanowa St. designed by Tadeusz Mateusz Tekielski (1898-1899) (photo: Elzbieta Przesmycka).**

Two-storeyed villa of Tekielski standing on the neighboring plot also has high steep roof covered with colorful tiles and supported with half-timbered structure of beams and corbels. Colorful frieze under the eaves is made of decorative ceramic tiles. The façade is dominated on the ground floor by semi circularly topped window, decorated with stained glass panels and a sculptured owl, inscriptions and a sundial above it. The façade decor is complemented with metal anchors, cartouches, a stone balustrade and a sandstone base course. Door joinery in both villas is decorated with carved heart-shaped elements and studs, similar to popular highland building

Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz (1883-1945) belonged to the younger generation of Polish architects. He was also a conservation officer. His works present the link between historicism and modernism. He studied architecture in Sankt Petersburg (1902-1909), later also in Austria, Bohemia and Germany. In 1910 he started lecturing at the Jagiellonian University (*UJ*) and the Academy of Fine Arts (*ASP*) in Cracow in 1912 he moved to Lviv to become professor of the University of Technology in Lviv (*Politechnika Lwowska*), where he remained until 1916. In 1911, he designed the building of Bank Przemysłowy (Szewska St., Rynek, 1911), the building at Zwierzyniecka St. Since 1916 he was involved in restoration of the Royal Castle on Wawel Hill, which was damaged by the Austrian army. In 1920 he took the post of professor at the Jagiellonian University decorations (*Uniwersytet Jagielloński*) and he became the head of the department of historic architecture at the Academy of Fine Arts (*Akademia Sztuk Pięknych*) in Cracow.

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In 1924-1929, he was rector of that school. In 1924 he designed many buildings in Cracow, for ex. the monumental building of PKO (Wielopole St. 19), Dom Towarzystwa Ubezpieczeń "Feniks" (Rynek Główny 41, 1928-32), in 1935 Józef Piłsudski House (Oleandry St.). He also designed guest houses and hotels in health resorts and the Castle of the President of the Republic of Poland (*Zamek Prezydenta RP*) in *Wisła* (1929-1930). 1928-29



8. Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, his own villa "Baszta" in Przegorzały near Cracow (1928-1929) (photo: Elżbieta Przesmycka).

he also conceived his own villa "The Tower" (*Baszta*) in Przegorzały as a stone tower built of local limestone, where he already used double reinforced construction for upper floor slab with an original suspended wood ceiling. The villa was designed as a tower, a typical form of Polish castles (Przesmycka, 2013), but designed in a modernistic style.

Various scientific and social organizations were founded in Galicia before World War I in order to draw attention to the significance of art and architecture. Similarly to other countries, exhibitions presenting achievements of artists and new trends in architecture became popular. 1912-1914 the Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors was organized in Garden Surroundings in Cracow which remained open to public until 1914. Unfortunately, the main pavilion, the theater, the model residential houses and other structures which were built on the exhibition grounds did not survive the war.

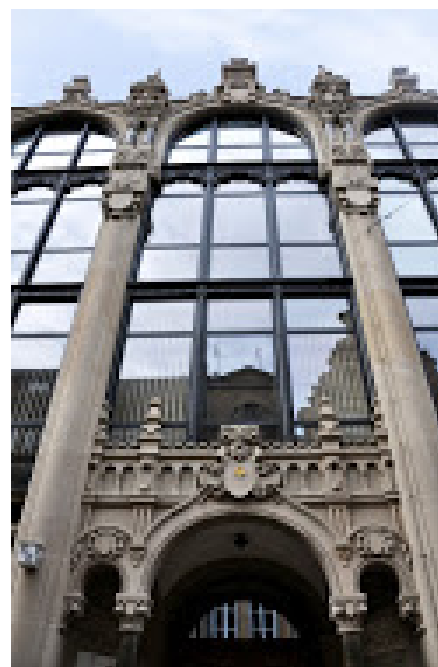
### Art Nouveau in Wrocław (Breslau)

Art Nouveau in Wrocław greatly differs from Art Nouveau in old Galicia. From the middle of the 18th century until the end of the 19th century, Wrocław (*Breslau*) belonged to Prussia and then – until 1945 – it was part of Germany. It was incorporated to Poland only after 1945 in exchange for some eastern part of Polish lands left to the USSR. Many architects from Berlin, for ex. Georg Hartel, Georg Schneider, Ehrlich Richard, Ehrlich Paul, Max Berg operated then in Wrocław.

#### *Architecture of the department stores*

In Wrocław art nouveau was applied mainly on public buildings, department stores, and townhouses owned by industrialists designed on a grand scale. Most of them had modern reinforced concrete frame structures and the influence of modernism was evident. Other new buildings featured eclectic historicism with elements of massive geometricizing Art Nouveau (Banaś and Szurkowski, 2009).

The huge Barasch Brothers' Department Store (*Warenhaus Gebrüder Barasch*) (Rynek 31–32) was designed by architect Georg Schneider 1904 to replace several townhouses, which were demolished. Initially, it was topped with a globe which was destroyed by a thunderbolt lightning. In the 1930s, the building was reconstructed, but without large glazing sections. Next to the department store an old factory and



9. Wrocław, (Rzeźnicza 32-33), Georg Schlesinger & Grunbaum department store, 1901, (photo: Elżbieta Przesmycka).



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department store of Schlesinger & Grünbaum was constructed, which was commissioned by Alois Schlesinger and David Eljakim Grünbaum.

One of the most beautiful examples of Art Nouveau architecture in Wrocław is the former Viktoriahaus department store designed by Georg Hartel (1898-1901) at Saint Mikołaja Street.

### ***Architecture and construction of public buildings at the beginning of the 20th century***

Typical features of Wrocław townhouses are high mansard roofs, projections, oriels, stone balconies, oval lintels, bas-reliefs on façades. Many schools from the beginning of the 20th century, as well as new university complexes, hospitals, and nursing homes used various building materials on their façades. Typical school buildings' brick façades are decorated with contrasting glazed elements, such as white glazed bricks, sandstone pedestals, and stone decorations of portals. University buildings' façades were usually covered with textured plasters and emphasized with stone pedestals, entrance



**10. Wrocław, Centennial Hall (1911-13), arch. Max Berg (photo: Elzbieta Przesmycka).**

portals, window frames and sculptural decor on exterior and interior. Traditional building structures allude to historicism using stone columns to support upper floor slabs made of artificial stone (lastrico). Some modern buildings in Wrocław already used reinforced concrete structures. The Market Hall (*Hala Targowa*) at Piaszkowa St. 17 for ex., designed by the architects Plüddemann Richard, Friese Friedrich, Küster Heinrich boasts with exceptionally modern reinforced concrete structure in parabolic forms. Another example of modern reinforced concrete structure is the hall designed by Max Berg with a span of 65 meters, Beelitz and Forster (2006)

### **Conclusion**

Art Nouveau architecture of Cracow was very much influenced by Vienna and Germany, particularly the Munich variation of the style. The architecture of Wrocław demonstrates characteristic influences from Berlin as well as from other European centers. The architecture of Wrocław quickly followed the world trends in the forms, functions of buildings, modern construction solutions and materials.

As a result of tragic historical events, partitions of the country, two world wars, human migrations, disregard of ownership rights for over 60 years after World War II architecture of the beginning of the 20th century in southern and western Poland suffered heavy damage. Contemporary conservation works are not sufficient to restore the magnificence of many architectural structures from that time. The preservation of the traits of authenticity that deserves special protection requires undertaking integrated renovation and conservation works as well as the use of traditional high quality materials and technologies.

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