



general editor
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National style and nation-state

Design in Poland from the
vernacular revival to the international style

David Crowley

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D.C.

A note on translation

I have tried, where possible, to use anglicisations of Polish place names. Accordingly, Warszawa is recognisable here as Warsaw and the Wisła river as the Vistula. In the case of towns and places which have been the victims of shifting borders and changing masters, and consequently have a number of different names such as Lemberg / Lwów / Leopold / Léopol / Lvov / L'viv, I have employed their contemporary Polish designation (in this case Lwów).

1 Introduction: remembrances of the past and longings for the future

Throughout our country, now but a remnant of the once powerful Polish State, we are, as we have always been, the offspring of Western civilisation. Such was the fate allotted to us. This influence and connection, which we shall uphold with pride, is confirmed alike by the art of our enlightened classes and by the art of our common people, and we intend to maintain it in the future.

Maryan Wawrzyniec, 1912

In Poland one historical fact dominates all others. Her partition by her neighbours at the end of the eighteenth century issued a cataclysmic shock to the nation, the tremors of which are still felt today. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century had been a vast state that stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea: even in 1772 her borders approached Kiev. But in that year Russia, Prussia and Austria sliced into the body of the ailing Polish Commonwealth of the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: the first of three partitions which finally, in 1795, erased Poland from the map of Europe. The Poles then had to wait 123 years until the conclusion of the First World War to return to statehood. But, echoing the lines of the anthem sung by General Jan Dąbrowski's Polish legion in Bonaparte's army in Italy in 1797, 'Poland has not perished as long as we live', the Poles refused to forget that Poland had once been a sovereign state or to be assimilated into the nations which had divided them.

Like the comparative studies of national identity,¹ the literature concerning the state of Polish national consciousness in the period of partitions is large and vigorously debated.² This book, though informed by these studies, is not concerned, in the first instance, with venturing along the well-worn track of enquiry into Polish national identity in a sociological or philosophical sense. Its primary concern is to present an elementary study of the rise and fall of the national styles which were derived from the vernacular in design between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1930s: a subject which has prompted very few studies even though it offers interesting reflections on the broader history of design in Europe. But a short discussion of the Polish nation and Polish nationalism under the conditions of partition must be made here for two reasons: firstly, to pre-

empt some of the assumptions about the 'characteristic xenophobia and absolute meanness of the nationalist mind'; and secondly, to map the specific intellectual context in which many of the individuals and notions, discussed in the early chapters of this book, matured. Most studies of nations and nationalism recognise that modern nations were delivered by the processes of industrialisation and capitalist development, and that their concomitant, national consciousness, matured with the extension of democracy, whereas the political consciousness of the Poles in the nineteenth century was formed in specific and quite different circumstances.

National consciousness

The Polish nation at the time of the partitions does not correspond with recognised, though often disputed notions of that concept as we understand it today. Defined ethnically, the population living in the land ruled by the last Polish monarch, Stanisław August, included many diverse peoples; Poles, Ruthenes, Jews, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Tartars and Germans, whereas the nation was constituted by the gentry (*szlachta*) and magnates who, from the late fifteenth century, had possessed the right to pass legislation and, from the late sixteenth century, the right to elect a king. The *Respublica* was a class democracy in which the political franchise was extended to a single estate; though one which, by socioeconomic measure, constituted a large (11-13 per cent of the population) and diverse group from extremely wealthy magnates to impoverished nobility working alongside the peasantry. Andrzej Walicki has written: 'The "nation" was conceived as a body politic, embracing all active citizens (i.e. all members of the gentry) irrespective of their native language or ethnic background. This tradition of multi-ethnic and multi-lingual nationalism survived until the middle of the nineteenth century.'³

When Poland was plunged into the deep chasm of the partitions in the 1790s, Romanticism was beginning its ascent across European culture. It was the prime agent in the process of inventing national symbols, including those of heroes and tyrants, for many European nations. In the aftermath of the partitions Polish Romantic thinkers found a fertile ground of noble myths in the lives and traditions of the gentry during the 'Golden Age' (*Złoty Wiek*) of the *Respublica*. Poets and artists played the role of national memory and voice, invoking a tradition of heroic patriotism, idealised notions of the nation outside ethnicity, and messianistic dreams of national revival. One crucial aspect of this richly embroidered history was the fascination in which gentry, i.e. the political nation, and especially Sarmatian tradition,⁴ was held. Myths of the great military prowess and heroism of the Polish army in the seventeenth century when the Poles had saved Christian Europe from the Turkish armies, and the individual rights

which the gentry had exercised primarily through the *Leberum Veto*,⁵ established a sense of innate freedom synonymous with being a Pole which had been stolen by Austria, Russia and Prussia.

In the nineteenth century these concepts guided national resistance to the partitioning powers, i.e. the two national insurrections largely enacted in the Russian partition; the November Rising of 1830 and the January Rising of 1863. Both rose and fell on national myths such as the idealised faith in the national struggle on behalf of oppressed peoples: the slogan of the 1830 uprising was 'For your freedom and ours.' This was a very different form of nationalism from those which were invoked at the lowest moments of the twentieth century: Polish patriotism could express more than ignoble national chauvinism. Following in the tradition of Polish heroes like Tadeusz Kościuszko who had fought for the American cause in the War of Independence, many of the combatants from the Polish insurrections took up arms in other people's struggles such as the liberal revolutions which flared across Europe in 1848 or the defence of the Paris Commune in 1871. The failure of the November Rising added fire to the pens of the Romantic poets. Inflamed with national passion and religious conviction, they shrouded the national cause in ideologies of messianism and martyrology. Poland, like Christ, was waiting for resurrection to return as the redeemer of the nations of Europe. Poles living in exile across Europe and the New World beseeched their hosts to come to the aid of their nation and to let international justice prevail, calling on a European debt owed to the Polish King, Jan Sobieski, who had led his army to save Europe from the Turkish threat in 1683 at the Battle of Vienna.

Poland, from the partitions to the January Rising of 1863, broadly constituted, following Friedrich Meinecke's famous categorisation, a 'Kulturnation', in that it was a political and social ideal; 'a spirit of community' (though not one characterised by passivity, an element in Meinecke's definition).⁶ This ideal, detached from the motors of modernisation and democratisation effecting the formation of national consciousnesses in much of Western Europe (i.e. producing Meinecke's alternative type of nation, the 'Staatsnation'), had an elective character. To be a Pole, though sometimes demanding pyrotechnic displays of patriotism, was contingent on individual will and lay outside strictly ethnic definition. The alternative to Polishness was clear: a good subject could assimilate, especially in Russia where the Tsarist authorities sought to foster pan-Slavism (noting that, of course, the cultural pressures of patriotism were onerous and the weight of history lay heavy on the shoulders of children of generations of nationalist insurgents). As a nation without a state, citizenship was equated with compromise. But from the middle of the century, and with increasing urgency after the failed 1863 Rising, the *Respublica* treasury of national myths was increasingly recognised to offer

few models of action to meet the pressing issues of modernity. Poland, retarded by both the partitioning powers as well as her own traditions of insurrectionary patriotism, had not enjoyed the benefits of industrialisation nor developed the bourgeois or civic values associated with the rise of the middle classes. It was a society formed out of the gentry and the peasantry: a social division which the partitioning powers sought to exploit (see Chapter 3).

State of the nation

The Romantic ideal of Poland was like a noble light which blinded some passionate patriots from seeing the material conditions of life of many of the people living in the ancient Polish territories in the nineteenth century. Life for the great majority of the population was one of poverty. The peasantry, four-fifths of ethnic Poles in the nineteenth century, existed in miserable want which was hardly improved by the land reforms enacted in all three partitions. Neglect of industry and commerce had not wrought the urbanisation that much of Europe experienced at this time. The nation suffered from successive waves of emigration: poverty amongst the peasantry induced large-scale emigration to the United States from the 1850s; and the social tremors of the failed insurrections sent great numbers into exile. The deportation of 180,000 Poles, as well as the 'Great Emigration' of the patriotic gentry and intelligentsia,⁷ which followed the November Rising, caused an intellectual haemorrhage which further strained the social imbalances of Polish society. One consequence of this was the near-absence of a middle class and, consequently, the bourgeois interests which had been central to fostering the industrial and commercial cultures in other parts of Europe (although it should be noted that Russian protectionism from the 1850s and the lifting of border restrictions between the Russian sector of Poland, the 'Congress Kingdom', and Russia, promoted a wave of economic growth and industrialisation).

But Romantic insurgency and martyrological poetry were not the sole response to national subjugation. After the failed January Rising of 1863, the dominant expression of patriotism, the Romantic insurrectionary tradition, declined (although it enjoyed a short revival in Paris in 1871 on the barricades and under the banners of 'liberty' when many Poles fought to save the Paris Commune), to be replaced by a code of responsible action. After the smoke cleared and the last deportations had been despatched to Siberia and exile, those who remained began to reflect on the state of Poland in the hands of the Hohenzollerns, Habsburgs and Tsars. In the last third of the century a number of different philosophies circulated in political debate in response to the failures of the uprisings and reflecting changing perceptions of Polishness.

'Organic Work' (*Praca Organiczna*), which will be more fully considered in Chapter 2, was a patriotic strategy developed by figures like Aleksander Świętochowski in Warsaw in the 1860s which was designed to preserve and maintain a Polish economic and cultural life. It sought to nurture the entire nation by education as well as economic and technical modernisation, and to protect it through conciliation with the partitioning powers. A generation later the far Right, led by Roman Dmowski, laid claim to an anti-Romantic politics of Realism which regarded the Polish condition at the time as the consequence of the inherent weakness of the *Respublica* and the 'right' of her vanquishers' 'might' to exercise their national interests. Opposed to the Romantic traditions of messianism and faith in the prevalence of justice as political *naïveté*, the far Right rejected the traditional definition of the nation as political community for one defined by language and ethnicity. Dmowski's political opponent throughout the late period of the partitions and the early years of Polish independence was Józef Piłsudski. A major figure in the Polish Socialist Party (*Polska Partia Socjalistyczna* / PPS) from 1893, he acted out a broadly Socialist but primarily nationalist campaign (including dramatic mail-train robberies and escapes from prison, and the raising of an army during the First World War) on behalf of 'a spiritual community, united by bonds of culture and history',⁸ a definition of the nation which offered membership of the Polish nation to Jews, Ukrainians and other peoples on the basis of a shared past. But this was not a return to the *Respublica* concept of the nation: Piłsudski and his fellow PPS conspirators saw the nation in the broadest of class terms.

The differences between these political ideologies were extremely marked and the antagonism between Dmowski and Piłsudski was certainly bitter, but the essential point here is that in the political shifts following the failure of the January Rising and the decline of Romantic patriotism, these ideologies each held a definition of the nation that was broader than those, inherited from the *Respublica*, which had held sway over the period of insurrections. Pre-sentiments of this view can be identified throughout the century: for example, both Joachim Lelewel, a historian, and his student Adam Mickiewicz, after losing his Romantic 'faith' in the 1840s, came to hold the belief that the people were the entire nation who had been failed by the gentry. But it was only the last third of the nineteenth century which saw wide recognition of the broad social base of the nation.

These extended notions of the people had many significant effects on the complexion of the political struggles in the late nineteenth century but, importantly for this study, the attention of nationalist activists broadened to include the ordinary things in the life of the people: patriotic culture was no longer the realm of just poets, but came to include the work of architects, designers and craftsmen; patriotic codes and allusions were drawn from

peasant life and culture; and the responsibility of the patrician Polish gentry lay no longer in keeping the soul of the nation, but its body too. Design was engaged in the struggle for Polish national sovereignty.

Spiritual ideals and material culture

Certain objects, artefacts and designs had heightened roles in partitioned Poland when compared to the centres of industry and relative domestic political stability in Europe, such as Britain. When explicit national expression was denied, venerable, artistic and commonplace artefacts were potential patriotic trophies capable of speaking of the nation to the nation under partition. In the 1930s one writer claimed that the late nineteenth-century Polish home was not only 'the last retrenchment of independence', a private world in which to escape from the humiliation of the loss of political sovereignty, but also a museum of national history filled with ancient artefacts and 'souvenirs' (and as such distinct from the pan-European taste for historicism and eclecticism).⁹

In a political culture which judged national sentiment as a mark of merit, design was sometimes measured by unusual standards. Questions of quality, propriety and, to some degree, taste were relegated to near-incidental, as commonplace things took on a condition akin to that of literature. Metaphor, allusion and symbol became the 'substance' of patriotic design. This literariness, reinforced by designers with dual careers as writers and playwrights, 'dramatised', as we will see in Chapter 3, architecture and other fields of design. After 1918 and the rebirth of the Polish State, the literary nature of nationalist culture became the focus of debate.¹⁰ With the rise of Functionalism and Formalist theories of art, 'literariness' was applied as a term of vilification; an attack on nationalist culture. But if design practice was divided by this rift of language in the inter-war period, concern with the Polish 'condition' rarely abated.

Unlike most other marginalised and suppressed peoples seeking national consciousness and expression in the nineteenth century, the Poles sought to return to the condition of statehood. They, as Jerzy Jedlicki has written, 'had lost control of her vast territory, a historical catastrophe without precedent in Europe'.¹¹ But significantly the Poles possessed an increasingly distant, though actual memory of 'golden ages'; times in which Poles had controlled their own national destiny. As time passed these memories were recovered and gilded by the poets and painters of the mid-century Romantic movement like Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki and Jan Matejko. They invented a language of symbols and gestures that gave great currency to certain heroic events and periods in national history. Consequently, the historicism typical of nineteenth-century material culture across Europe had a different register in partitioned Poland.

The distorting effect of partition also appears to have generated some novel theses about the cultural geography of the nation. Some Polish artists and designers, fighting the absorption of Polish culture into those of the partitioning powers, found Polish echoes in the cultures of distant peoples. When Russia, for example, went to war with Japan in 1904,¹² the pan-European fashion for all things Japanese received added impetus in the Polish lands. Historically, Polish patriotism had periodically turned eastward since the seventeenth century when the gentry adopted Sarmatian dress and social codes at the court of Jan Sobieski as an expression of their Polishness, a display of their military prowess and their scorn for the materialism of Western Europe. *Japonisme*, a strong tendency in Polish painting around the turn of the century, also offered an alternative vision of a 'national style' that did not lapse 'into slavish imitation of western art'.¹³ Feliks 'Manggha' Jasieński, a major collector and leading patron of Japanese and *Japoniste* art, wrote: 'I have shown you Japan to teach you to think about Poland, thus following the footsteps of artists who have thought about Japan in a Japanese style for over two thousand years'.¹⁴ The exposition of distant cultures to reflect on Polishness seems to have been a characteristic pattern during the partitions (and to some degree in independence after the First World War). Against the background of a popular fashion for the novels of James Fenimore Cooper (a friend of Mickiewicz and a great supporter of the Polish cause during the November Uprising in 1831), for example, the *Górale* (Highlanders) of the Tatra Mountains were caricatured as North American Indians in popular literature from the turn of the century (see Chapter 2).

A final point should also be made concerning the interdependency of Polish and Jewish culture both during the years of partition and in independent Poland after 1918. The Jews formed a very sizeable minority group within society until the Holocaust.¹⁵ Despite attempts to abuse the common history of both communities,¹⁶ they shared a rich and common culture throughout the period surveyed by this book.¹⁷ Jewish artists and designers in inter-war Poland played a crucial role in the development of Modernism. As a member of a Zionist collective of artist activists in Łódź, the Young Yiddish group, Henryk Berlew, for example, had established a reputation as an Expressionist graphic designer by 1920.¹⁸ After meeting and working with El Lissitzky, an important catalyst of Modernism in Poland and much of central Europe, in 1921, Berlew developed a Constructivist design practice derived from models established in the Soviet Union. Although running the risk of summoning up a Fascist spectre, the example of Berlew and other Polish Jews such as Teresa Żarnowerówna suggests the tenability of research into the Jewish contribution to the development of Modernism in Poland (and the whole of Europe): the topic of another book.

- 1 See A.D. Smith, *National Identity*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1991; P. Alter, *Nationalism*, Edward Arnold, London, 1989; D. Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1988, E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780*, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1990.
- 2 See S. Gomulka and A. Polonsky (ed.), *Polish Paradoxes*, Routledge, London, 1990; A. Walicki, *Philosophy and Romantic Nationalism: The case of Poland*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1982; W. J. Slankiewicz, *The Tradition of Polish Ideals*, Orbis, London, 1981; and A. Bromke, *The Meaning and Uses of Polish History*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1987.
- 3 A. Walicki, 'The three traditions in Polish patriotism' in Gomulka and Polonsky, *Polish Paradoxes*, p. 22.
- 4 The Sarmatians were a people who came to South-East Europe from the East in the sixth century. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the period of the great Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the gentry claimed descent from these 'warrior nobles' and assumed many of the traits of their contemporary 'Eastern' equivalents, the Hungarians and the Turks. They placed great pride in military heroism, horsemanship and conspicuous displays of wealth. See J. Tazbir, 'Sarmatica' in *Projecki*, 3/4, 1983, pp. 3-15 & T. Manikowski, 'Influence of Islamic Art in Poland' in *Arts Islamic*, II, 1935, pp. 93-117.
- 5 The right of any single member of the gentry to refuse any law passing through the *Sejm* (the Polish Parliament).
- 6 Meinecke's distinction is discussed in Alter, *Nationalism*, p. 14.
- 7 N. Ascherson, *The Struggles for Poland*, Michael Joseph, London, 1987, p. 26.
- 8 N. Davies, *God's Playground*, II, O.U.P., Oxford, p. 56.
- 9 L. Niemojewski, 'Décoration d'intérieurs en Pologne' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonaise à l'Exposition Internationale Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, 1937, pp. 261-2.
- 10 J. Kott, 'Foreword' to S. Witkiewicz, *The Madman and Nun and The Crazy Locomotive*, Applause, New York, 1989, p. viii.
- 11 J. Jedlicki, 'Holy ideals and prosaic life' in Gomulka and Polonsky, *Polish Paradoxes*, p. 42.
- 12 The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, coincidental with Bismarck's fall and internal crises within Russian Empire, notably the 'Bloody Sunday' massacre in St Petersburg in January 1905, raised the hopes of national liberation amongst Polish patriots.
- 13 A. Orecka, 'The Japanese influence on Polish art' in *Projecki*, January 1981, p. 47.
- 14 F. Jasiński quoted by L. Kossowski writing in the introduction to the catalogue of an exhibition, 'Inspiracje sztuki japońskiej w malarstwie i grafice polskich modernistów' held at the National Museum in Cracow in 1981.
- 15 In a 1921 national census Jews formed the second largest minority at 2,110,000 people after the Ruthenes (3,898,000 people). 18, 814, 000 ethnic Poles made up 70 per cent of the population. See R. Pearson, *National Minorities in Eastern Europe*, Macmillan, London, 1983, p. 163.
- 16 See J. Banas, *The Scapegoats*, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1979, and R. Wasita, 'From promised land to the land of the fathers' in *The Warsaw Voice*, 10 December 1989, p. 7.
- 17 See the catalogue to the exhibition 'Żydzi-Polscy' held at the National Museum in Cracow in June-August 1989.
- 18 J. Malinowski, 'Jewish artistic circles in inter-war Poland' in *Polish Art Studies*, X, 1989, pp. 62-3.

The tradition of all the dead weighs like a nightmare on the living.

Karl Marx

Adrian Baraniecki and the Museum of Industry

In 1864 Adrian Baraniecki, a Polish doctor from Jarmolińce in the *gubernia* (government district) of Podolia and citizen of the Russian Empire, was forced to flee to Paris, and later to London, after finding his name on a list of Poles sought by the Tsarist authorities for participating in the January Rising of the previous year. In London he met a number of British intellectuals including John Ruskin. Although there is little known about his contact with Ruskin, it is certain that he was greatly impressed with the recently established South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) run by Henry Cole.¹ At that time across Europe, a number of museums and associations concerned with applied art were being established under the influence of South Kensington, such as the Union Centrale des Arts Décoratifs in Paris of 1863 and the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie in Vienna which opened in the following year. The motive behind these continental initiatives appear largely to have been a concern with deflecting the effect of Cole's museum on national trade. Whilst still in London Baraniecki resolved to open his own museum in Galicia in the Austrian partition (the tremors of the 1863 uprising had not been felt so strongly there, and the region had been extended a marked degree of political autonomy to counter Polish disaffection following the Compromise of 1867) and began to buy works of applied art and technical instruments in anticipation of his return. In 1868 he secured support for the project from the mayor of Cracow, Dr Józef Dietl, a professor of medicine at the Jagiellonian University, and decided to establish his museum there.²

Whilst Baraniecki's aim was to influence the local economy, he, like Cole in Britain, took the moral stance of an arbiter of taste. He was concerned to present models of craft and technical excellence to stem the tide of mass-produced goods flooding into this underdeveloped agricultural region from the industrial centres of the Dual Monarchy; Moravia and Bohemia. Baraniecki turned over his own library of over 2,000 books and 5,000 objects collected in Poland and abroad (including a significant core

from the international exposition in Paris in 1867) to the city council, which, in return, provided an exhibition space in the Franciscan cloisters in the centre of the city and accorded the collection the status of a town museum, making Baraniecki its unpaid director. In 1880 he described the Museum of Industry's (*Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowe*), collection thus: 'The Museum numbers 30,000 exhibits – from raw materials to products of every branch of manufacturing industry, home industry and farming – amassed, for the most part, as gifts of people and different Polish associations at the lowest cost to the Museum. The Museum possesses 180 examples of tools, technical and industrial models, and scientific instruments.'⁴ One such important private donation was a tapestry illustrating the battle of Łojów given by Henryk Berezowski in 1884. The Museum also extended its collection to include objects from outside Europe through donations by Galician explorers such as Stanisław Szolc-Rogozński whose collection of art from Cameroon and Gabon was exhibited in 1884 and 1886.

In principle, and as Bolesława Kotodziejowa has claimed,⁵ Baraniecki's Museum drew upon the museological theories of Gottfried Semper (developed whilst in exile in London as a designer at the Great Exhibition of 1851 and working for Henry Cole preparing a catalogue of metalwork, as well as his designs for the Dresden picture gallery of 1847–54⁶). Although Semper's pamphlets and books were not translated into Polish until around the turn of the century,⁷ many Galician architects, almost without exception speakers of German, the *lingua franca* of Mitteleuropa, read his works from publication. Baraniecki adhered strongly to Semperian principle that his Museum should be both artistic and scientific in character, and wanted the collection to play a role in the education of Galician craftsmen. During the 1880s, for example, he instituted courses for apprentice craftsmen at the Museum (though, curiously, the scheme was suspended when it proved too popular with young unskilled workers). Baraniecki also followed Semper in the significance he attached to the vernacular and non-European arts alongside the more traditional areas of museum collections such as casts of Classical and Renaissance sculpture.

In tandem with its museological activities, this institution also promoted a number of educational courses for the citizens of Cracow. In 1870 a number of lectures for women were organised under the title of the Institute of Science for Women (*Zakładu Naukowego Dla Kobiet*). These courses were taught to academic standards by professors from the nearby Jagiellonian University⁸ and, divided amongst five departments, included lectures in subjects as diverse as the history of Polish literature and zoology. In his public announcement of the Institute, Baraniecki laid particular stress on the study of commerce (*nauki handlowe*), seeking to overcome the disdain in which it was held.⁹

The significance of these twin didactic functions of Baraniecki's Museum must be located in a contemporary shift in nationalist strategy. In the bitter aftermath of the failed 1863 Rising enacted in the Russian sector, Polish nationalists relinquished the gun and the petard for pragmatic political strategies with the intention of wringing political concessions from all three partitioning powers known as 'Organic Work' (*Praca Organiczna*).¹⁰ Fired by the writings of August Comte and Charles Darwin, and the English Utilitarian, John Stuart Mill, its proponents developed a nationalist political strategy paralleling Scientism. Adam Zamoyski has written:

Material concepts of progress born of the industrial revolution in England and France exerted a profound fascination on Polish intellectuals as they gazed at the primitive peasantry of Galicia operating the three-field system as they had done in the thirteenth century. The Romantic concept of the nation as spirit or divine body had given way to the concept of the nation as an organism. The nebulous dreams of the Romantics' New Jerusalem were superseded by 'scientific' visions of an earthly paradise.¹¹

The proponents of this nationalist strategy concentrated on improving the economic health, social conditions, cultural traditions and educational standards of the nation under partition. This political philosophy was intended to maintain distinctly Polish ways of life in the face of Austrian indifference; pan-Slavism in the Congress Kingdom designed to strip out the latinate, western elements in Polish culture (and hence, a greater attack on the nobility and intelligentsia); and Otto von Bismarck's *Kulturkampf* in the Prussian partition.¹² It was felt that such a distinctly maintained national voice would be able to 'speak with authority' to those states.¹³

In Galicia, an area which one historian has described as 'the agrarian slum of Europe' at that time, the proponents of Organic Work were faced with specific difficulties.¹⁴ For although the two other areas of the tripartition were subject to particularly severe forms of cultural repression, including the prohibition of the Polish language (with Polish illiteracy at 94 per cent in the Russian partition at the turn of the century), they were relatively industrialised and economically prosperous.¹⁵ In contrast, Austria, following its defeat at the hands of the Prussians at the Battle of Sadowa in 1866, encouraged an increasing degree of regional or national self-expression to the diverse peoples living on its territories. Galicia, in the late nineteenth century, enjoyed a number of cultural and political freedoms: it had its own local political mechanisms, representatives at the *Reichsrat* in Vienna and a Minister for Galician Affairs from 1871.¹⁶ Polish was its 'official' language; and education was directed from the regional Diet in Lwów. Yet economically, Austrian Poland had barely left the Middle Ages: agriculture was dominated by great estates and strip farming; the Industrial Revolution had hardly made an impact; and the majority of the rapidly growing population lived in miserable poverty. Living stand-

ards in the region were synonymous with hardship: 'Galician poverty' (*bieda Galicyjska*) was a common adage. Organic Work brought very little economic progress to Galicia bar a much vaunted but ineffectual railway between Cracow and Brody on the Russian border in 1869. But as a philosophical *Weltanschauung*, Organic Work's significance was felt far more keenly across Polish culture: the writings of the Stańczyk Group (*Stańczycy*) of historians and journalists from Cracow,¹⁷ and the author Bolesław Prus (the pseudonym of Aleksander Głowacki), a leading figure in the group of 'Positivist' writers (from August Comte's 'Positive Philosophy') from Warsaw, being the two most prominent and influential examples. Perhaps paradoxically, such figures as the *Stańczycy*, although regarded as political conservatives for their rejection of the insurrectionary tradition and loyalty to the Habsburgs, were, in fact, proto-Modernists in the faith that they placed in science and economic progress. But theirs was not a form of ruthless social Darwinism, nor an abdication of patriotism: they invested energy in improving the rights of the marginalised; women, peasants and Jews, through culture and education, and attacked class divisions and clericalism, under slogans which stressed the importance of knowing the life of the masses, and of social co-operation.

It is clear that Baraniecki's own Organic Work at the Museum of Industry was socially orientated and lay in his attempts to raise the taste of Cracovians, both as consumers, and as craftsmen and minor manufacturers in the city. Furthermore, Baraniecki, through the Museum's pedagogic activities, regarded women as the mothers of future Polish generations and, as such, guardians of the flame of national culture; a role promoted for women by Polish nationalists from the mid-nineteenth century.¹⁸ His efforts were sanctioned by the Cracow authorities in 1884 when they issued a further municipal statute commanding the Museum to 'influence higher industrial standards in every aspect and field with special attention to industry and the crafts'.¹⁹ It encouraged the establishment of 'collections of examples and samples, a library, drawing and modelling classes, workshops of technology and chemistry, a foundry, lectures, publications, lessons and exhibitions'.²⁰ Under this statute the Museum's acquisitions were dedicated as inspirational sources for Galician craftsmen. To this end emissaries were sent to all the major international exhibitions and *expositions universelles* in Europe and North America. The collection was significantly extended by these forays and shifted it into fields of contemporary European manufactures and applied art. At the 1878 international exposition in Paris, for example, the Museum acquired a number of works by Emil Gallé.

But it was not until the early years of the twentieth century that the Museum came fully into the orbit of the growing Polish Arts and Crafts Movement, and the workshops envisaged in the 1884 statute came into

being (although the Museum, like many others, had operated a plaster casting-studio for a number of years). From 1904, when the directorship of the Museum passed to Feliks Kopera under the aegis of the National Museum in Cracow (following the death of the second director of the Museum from 1895, Jan Wdowiszewski), a heated debate flared in the pages of the press between different vested interests in Cracow over the future of the institution.²¹ Consensus lay in the belief that the Museum should exert an influence over the commercial life of the city, though one community advocated the development of a machine hall displaying the achievements of modern European industry, whereas representatives of the Arts and Crafts Movement (see below) such as Jerzy Warchałowski envisaged the development of workshops in which artists could see their projects realised and craftsmen educated.

This debate was resolved when Tadeusz Stryjeński, an architect and the member of the city council with responsibility for building, who had studied under Gottfried Semper in Zurich in the late 1860s, wrote an article in *Czas* (Time) in 1906 suggesting a thirteen-point plan for the redevelopment of the Museum, including its absorption into a new larger institute, *Institut Sztuki i Rzemiosła im. Franciszka Józefa* (The Franz Joseph Institute of Art and Handicraft), to be so named, in the sixtieth anniversary of his imperial rule (1908), to attract funding from Vienna. Consequently, in 1907 Stryjeński was offered a contract from the city council to take over the position of Museum Director for a period of three years, to design a new building for the Museum and to reorganise the collections. In November of that year the city council agreed to the erection of a new building in Smoleńsk Street to house the growing collection and workshops with funding from the Great Savings Bank of Cracow (*Wydział Wielkiej Kasy Oszczędności Miasta Krakowa*). Before designing the building and planning the layout of the display, Stryjeński had visited a number of museums across Europe, including those in Nuremberg and Prague in 1907. But the restrictive nature of the narrow site in a street of tall apartment houses dictated a complex plan dominated by a central stair-well and small galleries quite unlike other European museums of the day. The building work began in 1909 and was completed in 1913 after a number of constructional difficulties, including the collapse of the walls around its inner courtyard.²² A painter, Józef Czajkowski, designed its simple façade distinguished by its overhanging eaves and rustic stonework.

The core of Stryjeński's plan, within the traditions of both Semper and Baraniecki, was the development of practical workshops and studios in which projects could be realised by the Museum's craftsmen. The first workshop, the bookbinding studio under the authority of Bonawentura Lenart, a teacher at the School of Industry (*Szkoła Przemysłowa*) in Cracow, opened in 1909 before the new building was erected, on the old site of



1 Museum of Industry designed by Tadeusz Stryjeński (structure) and Józef Czajkowski (façade), ul. Smoleńsk 9, Cracow, 1909–13

the Museum. This was subsequently followed by the metal workshop in 1911 under the authority of Wacław Jaroszyński, a skilled craftsman, and Kazimierz Młodzianowski, an artist, and by 1914 the new building also housed a carpentry workshop, and printing and photography studios. The

Museum shared its new home with the National Institute for the Promotion of Handicraft and Industry (*Krajowy Instytut Popierania Rękodziel i Przemysłu*), an advisory body that counselled manufacturers and craftsmen about professional standards.

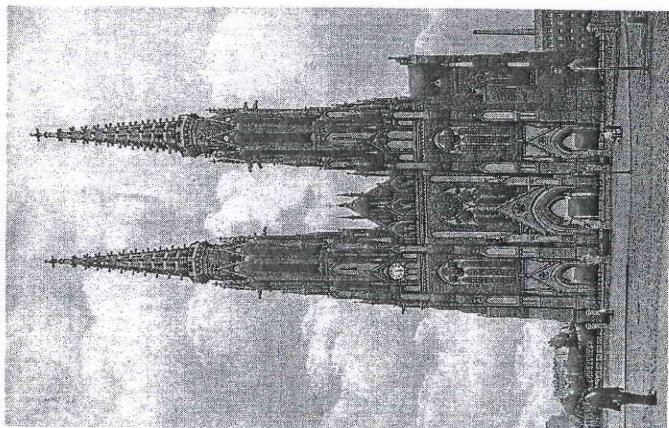
In the years before the First World War the Museum (and Institute) played a key role in the history of the Polish Arts and Crafts Movement: in publishing a periodical *Przegląd Rękodzielniczy* (Handicraft Review) edited by Stanisław Till and a number of texts by foreign design theorists such as Hermann Muthesius's *Kunstgewerbe und Architektur* in Polish;²³ in contributing to key exhibitions of contemporary architecture and design such as *Architecture and Interiors* in Gardens (*Architektura i wnętrze w otoczeniu ogrodowym*) in Cracow in 1912; and most significantly, as home to the leading Polish Arts and Crafts reformers, the Cracow Workshops (*Warsztaty Krakowskie*), from their foundation in 1913. But beyond these specific activities, Baraniecki's Museum was a crucial catalyst for the development of an ideology of an emphatically *Polish* Arts and Crafts Movement. The mid-century tenets of Organic Work at root behind the Museum's foundation found happy correspondence with the ideas of the European Arts and Crafts Movement circulating in Poland at the start of the new century. In the same spirit, writers like Eliza Orzeszkowa, enthused with the moral ideology of Organic Work, echoed Ruskinian themes such as the nobility of handicraft, in novels such as her *Nad Niemnem* (On the Niemen, 1888) which celebrated the virtue of physical work. Although by the last years of the nineteenth century those Poles concerned with design reform could draw intellectual justification from the unimpassioned patriotism of Positivism, what they lacked was expression of Polishness through artefacts and buildings – a national style.

Stanisław Witkiewicz: champion of the Zakopane Style

Around the turn of the century a number of different architectural styles, each with its own advocates, vied for the accolade of acknowledgement as the 'national style' (*styl narodowy*). In fact, during the final two decades of the Polish partitions much 'objective' thought was given by architectural historians and architects to the constituent forms of native architectural traditions. Szymon Szyller, the architect of Warsaw's Poniatowski Bridge of 1905, published a grammar of Polish architectural forms under the title of *Tradycja budownictwa ludowego w architekturze polskiej* (Native Building Traditions in Polish Architecture, 1917), the result of years of architectural 'archeology'. Szyller, in his own architectural practice, favoured a Renaissance style derived from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century buildings found in central Poland (usually designed by Italian architects). He was responsible for the restoration of the cathedral at Plock in 1902–03 which

contained both romanesque and Renaissance elements.²⁴ Others, such as Józef Pius Dziekoński, favoured a pointed variant of the Gothic known as Vistula-Baltic Gothic (*Gotyck Nadwislanski*). He designed Warsaw's St Florian's church, built between 1888 and 1901, in this style. Although highly influenced by the ideas of the English and French Gothicists, and Eugène Viollet-le-Duc in particular,²⁵ Polish advocates of this style believed that they had identified national characteristics in the Gothic architecture found in towns along the Vistula river in the north of Poland. Despite their pretensions to architectural 'archeology', these advocates of historicism were largely motivated by aesthetic proclivities. The claims made for the vernacular architecture and design from the Podhale region, then under the rule of the Habsburgs, whilst certainly no less exaggerated than those for the Gothic, held greater significance for the history of design in Poland. For Podhale culture not only caught the imagination of a great number of architects and designers, but Polish society across all three partitions.

In the nineteenth century the town of Zakopane was the regional centre of the Podhale area, the northern foothills below the Tatra mountains. It was largely populated by an ethnically and linguistically distinct people, the *Górale* (Highlanders).²⁶ Podhale was one of the poorest and most isolated areas, claimed as Polish by nationalists, in the Austro-Hungarian



2 St Florian's Church designed by Józef Pius Dziekoński, Warsaw, 1888–1901

Monarchy. Untouched by industry, its population survived as farmers and shepherds on the forested slopes and valleys of the Tatras. A key figure in the history of the region was a doctor, botanist, national activist and mountaineer, Tytus Chałubiński, who had been a professor at the Warsaw Academy of Surgical Medicine until 1871. He came from Warsaw to stay in Zakopane for the first time in 1873 to combat a cholera epidemic.²⁷ This experience led him to become one of the founders of the Tatra Society (*Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie*) in that year. As an institution established to promote and preserve *Górale* ways of life, the Tatra Society was a classic example of the nationalist / Positivist strategy of the institutionalisation and maintenance of Polish culture.²⁸ The Society sought to improve the social conditions of the local population and was a major force behind the establishment of a technical school in the town to harness the skills of local carpenters and wood craftsmen in 1876.²⁹ It was also a major promoter of the region as a health resort, and Chałubiński, in particular, has been credited as the 'discoverer of Zakopane' (*odkrywcą Zakopanego*) for encouraging the bourgeoisie and intelligentsia to come to the area to rest and recuperate in the pure mountain air. Under the influence of figures like Chałubiński, Zakopane became a major health resort attracting wealthy Poles from across all the partitions. Whilst the very richest built Alpine-style villas as summer retreats, the less affluent stayed in the town's many sanatoria.

The Podhale region symbolised a freedom unavailable in the rest of the partitions. Its isolation made it a place where Polish life was unhindered by the oppressions of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy: be they the infamous web of petty bureaucracy that fettered the Monarchy together or the enervating politics of compromise in Vienna.³⁰

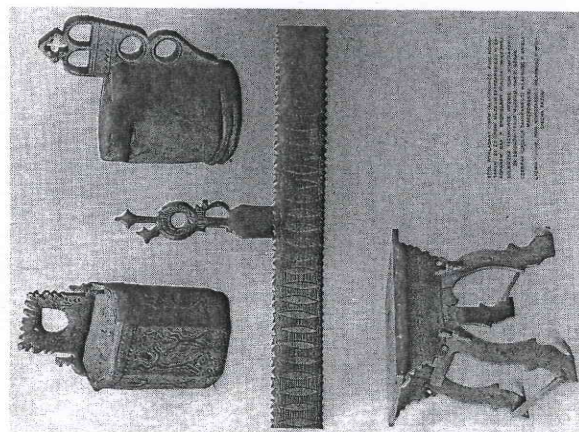
Hej za mną w Tatry! w ziemię czarów,
Hey with me through the Tatras! into this magic land
Na strome szczyty gór!
On to cliff tops!
Okiem rozbijem dal obszarów,
Our gaze will collapse distant territories,
Czołami siegniemy chmur.
Our foreheads will touch the clouds.³¹

Furthermore, this mountainous region's untouched natural beauty appeared evidence of an intact and 'pure' Poland. Halina Kenarowa, a historian, employing the familiar language of Polish messianism, described the significance of the Tatra mountains in this way: 'They were the Polish altarpiece during the partitions.'³²

It was not a great leap to extend this vision of an uncontaminated Polish nature to the local *Górale* people; their lives, dress, traditions and possessions.³³ In 1886 Stanisław Witkiewicz, an artist and art critic from Cracow,

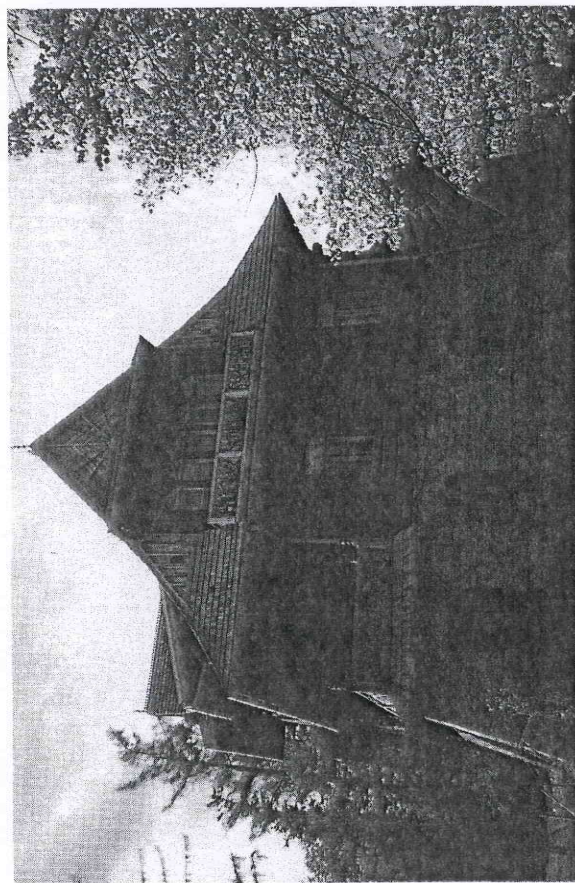
visited the Tatra mountains for the first time. As both a nationalist and a fervent opponent of historicism in the arts, he found in *Górale* architectural and decorative traditions what he later argued to be the essence of Polish culture in form.³⁴ This material culture seemed not only unsullied by the partitions but free of all foreign traces, like a living fossil formed 'when the characteristics of national genius were consolidated and fixed'.³⁵ Witkiewicz was much taken with the vernacular *Górale* homes: long, low wooden cabins constructed from great logs and insulated with straw; topped with a wooden-slatted, half-gable roof with deep overhanging eaves. They were characteristically decorated with simple, geometric patterns or plant forms on the door-frame or across the main structural beams inside the house. At the same time Witkiewicz and his supporters were also greatly concerned with the spread of 'Alpine' chalets erected by wealthy Poles from outside the region. His friend, Stanisław Eljasz-Radzikowski, recalling the 1880s, wrote in 1901: 'Zakopane was already covered with the homes of the squirearchy and drab cosmopolitan homes in a Swiss-style. It seemed that the native *Górale* cabin would disappear because many of them built homes quickly, and in speculation, in the style of the genre'.³⁶

Witkiewicz claimed the 'discovery' of the roots of a Polish national style in the wooden vernacular architecture of the region. Significantly, in this he differed from the supporters of historicist models which sought to restore particular architectural languages so as to revive the values of a particular historical epoch: the Renaissance and Gothic styles found advo-



cates and intellectual justification as the fruits of 'golden ages' in Polish history. In contrast, the promotion of the Zakopane Style (*Styl Zakopiański*) can be regarded as an example of what Adam Miłobędzki has identified in central Europe as 'the Romantic idealisation of the peasantry, and the unflinching trust that in this peasant culture the authentic, unchanging traits of national tradition have been preserved'.³⁷ True to this prescription, Witkiewicz argued, contrary to ethnographic evidence, that the peasant material culture of the Podhale region held the last vestiges of a style that at some unspecified time in the past had been found all over Poland, and now only remained in the then near inaccessible foothills of the Tatras.³⁸

In the 1890s Witkiewicz, then a resident of Zakopane, and his colleagues; architects, Julian Orchowicz, Stanisław Porczyński, Teodore Burze, and Eugeniusz Wesolowski, Stanisław Barabasz, and literary propagandists such as Stanisław Eljasz-Radzikowski, collectively and self-consciously set about recasting the raw materials that they had found in Zakopane into an intellectually complex decorative and architectural language. Witkiewicz wrote in a letter to his sister in 1898: 'We build more. One home is completed, two more are under way. *Zakopane is developing well, in its own style*'.³⁹ This first home, to which Witkiewicz referred, was the *Willa Koleba* which he designed in 1892 for Zygmunt Gnatowski from the Ukraine in which to house his family and entertain his circle of artistic friends (including the celebrated American / Polish actress Helena Modrzejewska). In plan, this relatively simple building followed the characteristic form of the

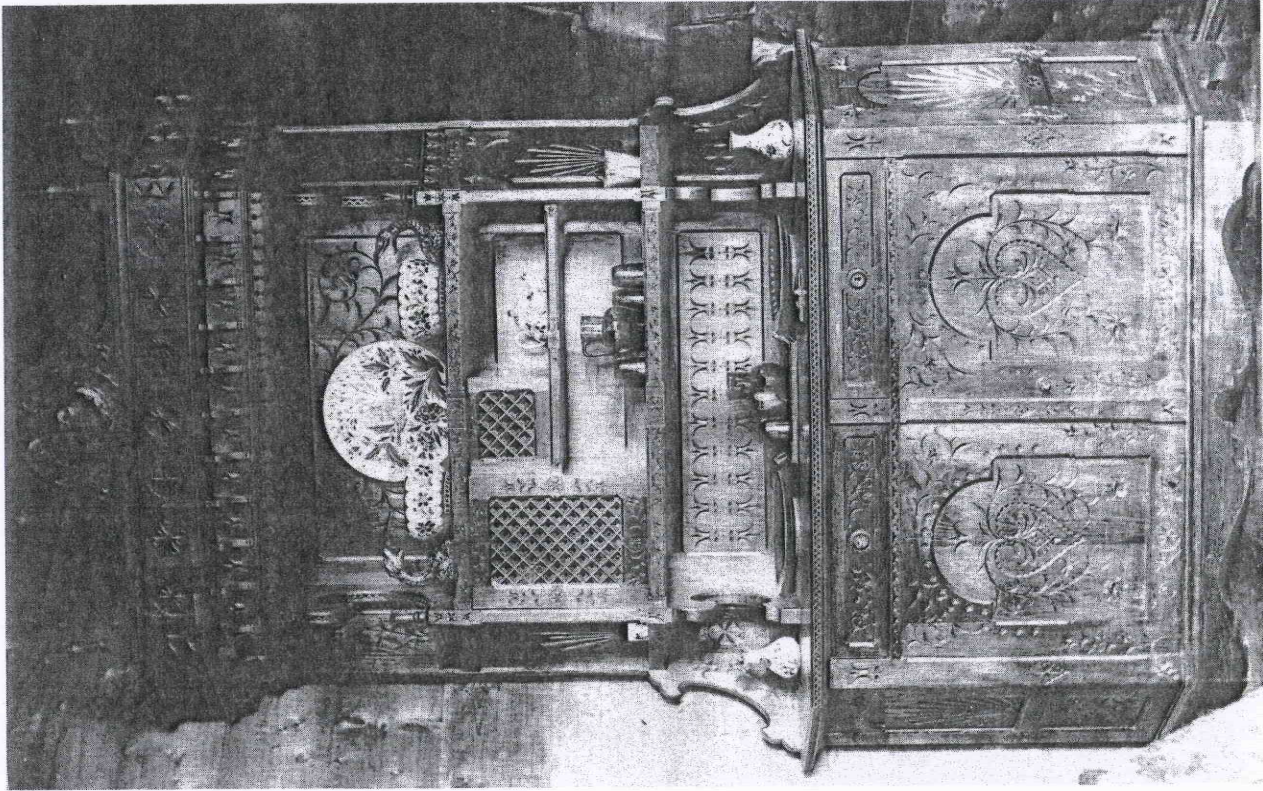


4 House under the Firs designed by Stanisław Witkiewicz, 1897

Górale home; a long barn-like building with sharp gables at either end. Similarly, the hooded entrance porch was positioned mid-way along the north facing long wall. But the differences between this building and its stylistic sources betray architectural sophistication: the informally positioned dormer windows; the rusticated stonework foundations; and the high number of decorative motifs derived from the vernacular which cloak the building. The sun motif, typically found on the gable ends of *Górale* homes, for example, was applied to window frames, decorative panels and the small pitched roofs above the dormer windows in the *Willa Koleba*. Witkiewicz employed the skilled local sculptor, Wojciech Brzega, to produce these decorative elements.

The Zakopane Style reached its apotheosis in Witkiewicz's House under the Firs (*Dom pod Jedlami*) of 1897. This, the largest of Zakopane Style homes, was commissioned by Jan Gwałbert Pawlikowski, an economist and historian, and erected in nine months with the aid of some of the style's most accomplished craftsmen; Wojciech Roj, Jan Obrochta and Jędrus Gąsienica. This building, displaying an extraordinary virtuosity of craftsmanship in wood inside and out, revealed the style at its greatest distance from traditional roots. Built on a sloping site, the House under the Firs had a plan of concealed complexity with three floors, terracing and projecting gables that held entire rooms. The dominant, steeply-pitched roof was a complex of brick chimneys, deep eaves and dormer windows. These characteristics owed much to the spread of the Free English architectural style across Europe, via Germany and its own vernacular revival, in the 1880s,⁴⁰ and an Arts and Crafts-inspired fascination with the commonplace and rustic.⁴¹ But it was the deployment of local building and decorative techniques that was intended to express 'Polishness'. In decorative character the House under the Firs was unified and complete as the exterior decorative forms were repeated throughout the interior. The heart-shaped motifs found in the lattice fencing on the south facing walls of the building, for example, were repeated in the drawing room door-frames. No aspect of the home was left unconsidered, for Witkiewicz and his colleagues designed, and local craftsmen made every item of furniture, most of the fabric coverings and curtains, and the large free-standing ovens that heated the house in the Zakopane Style.

This circle of architects and craftsmen dedicated much energy to a range of fields within the applied arts. Wojciech Brzega, for example, designed highly mannered Zakopane Style tables and chairs in which the studded and exposed joints were utilised as subtle, rhythmic decorative devices. In their original context most *Górale* decorative motifs, such as the gable-end sun figure, appear to have resulted from constructional forms. The style's practitioners frequently employed such motifs in ways that were unknown to the vernacular. In a 1901 set of table and chairs, Stanisław Barabasz took

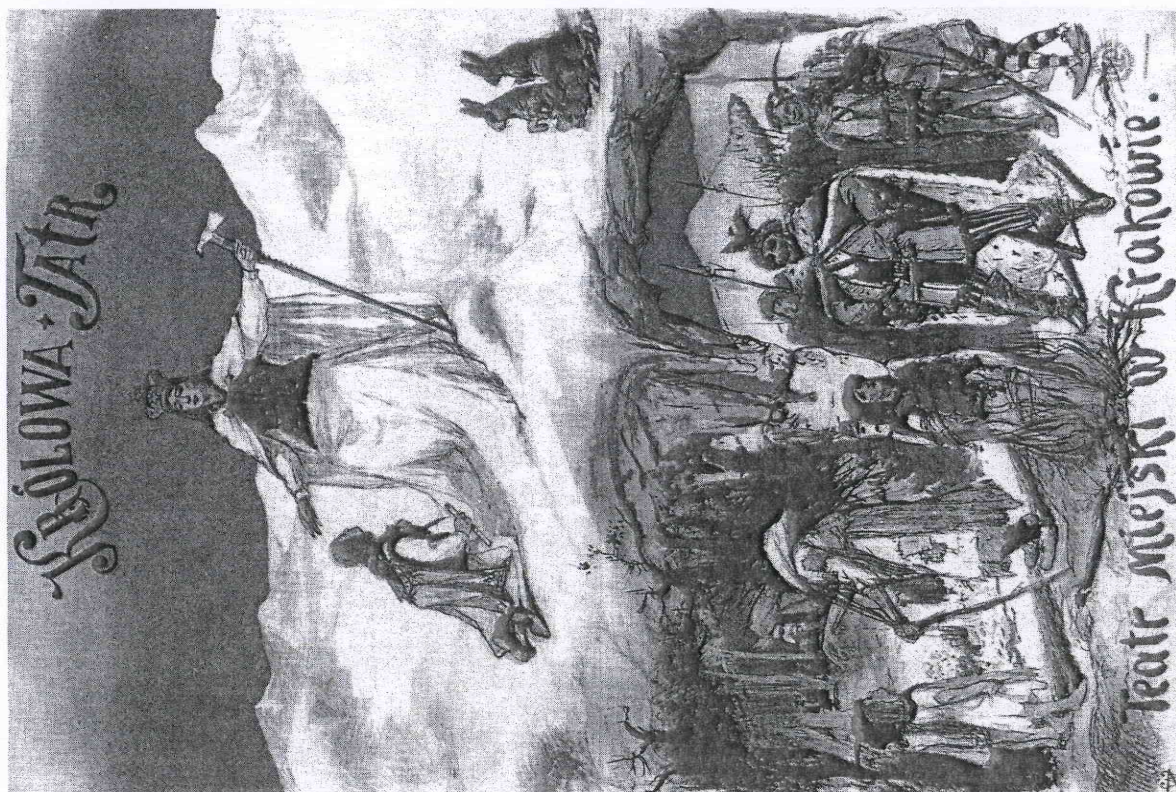


5 Corner dresser from the House under the Firs, 1897 (probably designed by Wojciech Brzega)

the sun motif and a geometric floral design circumscribed by a hexagon (a popular motif found across Europe since the Middle Ages), and combined them to create an attractive chair-back. In the late 1890s Witkiewicz produced a range of designs for porcelain jugs and bowls derived from a local ladle notable for its highly carved handle, which was used to drink goat's milk. The latter were produced by a Sèvres ceramic manufacturer under the name of *Le Style Polonaise*.⁴²

The Zakopane Style closely paralleled other neo-vernacularist practices of the day. In Hungary, for example, Károly Kós and his circle of architect-designers exercised their nationalist vision by, initially, collecting folk artefacts, and then in the early years of the twentieth century, designing buildings that look surprisingly similar to those built by these Polish patriots.⁴³ Despite Witkiewicz's claim to have tapped a national vein, it would appear that he and his followers were part of a pan-European current of interest in the revival of vernacular tradition. As Adam Miłobędzki has argued, in those nations threatened or marginalised by imperialism, the vernacular became 'symbolic of national unity' (such as Poland), or, for others, of 'social progress' (such as Hungary).⁴⁴ Furthermore, the Zakopane Style, despite its claims to have tapped a vernacular source and to have rejected historicism, was, in fact, a hybrid style. In both peasant architecture and furniture one can find traits of undisguised historical ornament such as late Renaissance carved scrolls: this was not a form of revived historicism, but an authentic tradition of applied art.⁴⁵ But the Zakopane Style was less a 'natural' continuation of local traditions by *Górale* craftsmen than a refinement of those elements of the vernacular which met with Witkiewicz and his colleagues' approval.

The Zakopane Style was also self-conscious nationalist affair steered by intellectuals and artists. The political aspect of the Style is made clear in the controversy surrounding the local *fachschule* in Zakopane in the late 1880s.⁴⁶ Between 1886 and 1896 the School of Wood Industry was under the directorship of Franciszek Neuzil, a Czech architect of picturesque Tyrolean homes (an 'alien' form of mountain building types regarded as bland by the supporters of the Zakopane Style). His teaching methods and enthusiasm for the German Renaissance style in the applied arts drew fire from the supporters of the Zakopane Style who argued that the School threatened to destroy local skills and deprive young *Górale* craftsmen of their own native traditions. Witkiewicz and his colleagues orchestrated a successful campaign against the School's educational programme (Neuzil was replaced by Edgar Kovats in 1896) which succeeded in 1901 when the directorship of the School passed to Stanisław Barabasz, a Polish architect and member of Witkiewicz's camp. This was not simply a campaign against Neuzil but against the authority of Vienna and the culture of the Dual Monarchy.



6 Zygmunt Wierciak's poster for 'The Queen of the Tatras' for the Town Theatre, Cracow, 1905.

Although Zakopane and the Podhale region as a whole had drawn artists and writers from the 1850s, the activities of Witkiewicz and his friends in the 1890s gave the culture of the region a great boost.⁴⁷ In fact, by the early 1900s an informal artists' colony had formed. Many painters, writers, musicians and actors moved to the region and, consequently, *Górale* mythology and patterns of life began to play a major role in Polish high culture. Jan Kasprzowicz, a poet, originally from the Prussian partition, came to Zakopane for the first time in 1891. His writing was strongly influenced by the mountainous landscape and, enamoured with the peasant culture that he found there, he became one of the leading figures agitating for the Tatra Museum's own building in the town from 1902. Despite Zakopane's distance from the cultural centres of Cracow and Lwów, its attraction to the Polish intelligentsia lay in a peasant-inspired ideology rooted in the twin constructs of the liberty of the region and the inspirational nobility of its indigenous culture. Many of these 'immigrants' also became patrons of Zakopane Style architects and designers: a mutual reciprocation and confirmation. Life in Zakopane was not just 'the escape from the town' of the artists' colonies like that on the Mathildenhöhe outside Darmstadt from 1899, it was also an attempt to escape from Austrian rule.

Even those unable to leave the cities of Galicia to enjoy the life of a cultured highlander were able to participate in what became a popular fashion for all things *Górale*. At the Town Theatre (*Teatr Miejski*) in Cracow in 1905, for example, audiences enjoyed a play called *Królowa Tatr* ('The Queen of the Tatras') or could visit an exhibition mounted by the Polish Applied Art Society (*Towarzystwo Polska Sztuka Stosowana*) which collected and displayed both original domestic utensils made by *Górale* craftsmen or furniture designed by renowned Zakopane Style artists. At the Society's annual exhibition in 1902 they showed a model of Witkiewicz's House Under The Firs. Amongst patriotic fashionable Warsaw it became highly modish to wear clothes inspired by Podhale peasant dress; white blouses with lacework, short, stiff waistcoats decorated with fine embroidery in richly coloured geometric patterns, and full woollen skirts. The greatest social cachet was not found, however, in wearing the most authentic costume, but one that had been designed by Stanisław Witkiewicz himself.⁴⁸ It is highly significant that the popular fashion for the Zakopane Style penetrated as far as Warsaw, which was then, at least on a political map of Europe, another city in another empire. Similarly, a few bizarre buildings were erected in Warsaw in the Zakopane Style such as Jarosław Wojciechowski's 1906 apartment house (30 Chmielna St). The façade of this four-storey building in a main shopping street mimicked, in decorative masonry, the primitive jointing of typical Zakopane wood construction techniques, and its stone balconies clumsily copied the subtle wood lattice work of Podhale craftsmanship.

But to question the logic of a rural, wooden building form derived from particular constructional techniques or carved decoration when built in stone in cities; or to issue challenges to the Zakopane Style in terms of its Polish uniqueness, i.e. that its advocates were mistaken in finding national qualities in what was an international phenomenon – the vernacular mountain culture which scored central Europe on the slopes of the Carpathian mountains; or even to ridicule the attempt to establish a national style on the decorative traditions of a twelfth-century immigrant population, would be to misunderstand the national impulse in Polish design in this late period of the partitions. Of all the properties of this style, the most important was its symbolic value. It may be that Jarosław Wojciechowski's 1906 apartment house verged on architectonic absurdity, but as a patriotic gesture in an age of cultural activism it was as eloquent as the Raclawice Panorama⁴⁹ or Bolesław Prus's novel *Lalka* (The Doll, 1890).⁵⁰ To those Versavians aware of the nationalist culture in the Tatras, the gesture embodied in Wojciechowski's employment of a building style originating in the distant mountains of another empire must surely have been clear.

Notes

- 1 J. Rostafiński, 'Adrian Baraniecki Twórca Muzeum Przem. 1828–1891' in *Przemysł i Rzemiosło*, 1, 1921, pp. 3–8.
- 2 See *Przewodnik po zbiorach Muzeum Przemysłowego im. dra A. Baranieckiego w Krakowie*, Muzeum Przem., Cracow, 1928, and E. Tor, 'Zadania M. Muzeum Przemysłowego w Krakowie' in *Przemysł i Rzemiosło*, no. 1, 1921, pp. 8–11.
- 3 The Museum changed its name on a number of occasions during its existence (1868–1950). For the sake of clarity I have chosen this abbreviated form of translation.
- 4 A. Baraniecki, *Krótkie sprawozdanie z dwunastoletniej działalności z obecnego stanu Muzeum techniczno-przemysłowego krakowskiego*, Cracow, 1880, p. 1.
- 5 B. Kołodziejowa, 'Miejskie Muzeum Przemysłowe im. dra Adriana Baranieckiego w Krakowie' in *Rozprawy i sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, XI, 1976, p. 195.
- 6 See W. Hermann, *Gottfried Semper*, M.I.T., Cambridge, Mass., 1984.
- 7 G. Semper's *Die Vier Elemente Baukunst* of 1851, for example, was published by the journal *Architektura* in Poland in 1904 as a book (*Cztery pierwiastki sztuki budowniczej*, translated by Władysław Ekielski).
- 8 The ancient Jagiellonian University (founded in 1364) was extended the greatest academic freedom of all Polish educational institutions during the partitions and consequently its alumni from this period include the leading patriotic intellectuals of the day.
- 9 A. Baraniecki, *Odczyty Publiczne* (Prospectus for the Institute), Cracow, 4 November 1870, p. 2.
- 10 'Organic Work' describes a nationalist strategy that developed in Posnania in the Prussian partition in the 1830s and was adopted across all the partitions in the 1860s. A. Zamoycki, *The Polish Way*, John Murray, London, 1989, pp. 316–17.
- 11 Zamoycki, *The Polish Way*, pp. 316–17.
- 12 See L. Trzeciakowski, *The Kulturkampf in Prussian Poland*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1990.
- 13 R.F. Leslie, *The History of Poland Since 1863*, C.U.P., Cambridge, 1983, p. 6.
- 14 N. Ascherson, *The Struggles For Poland*, Michael Joseph, London, 1986, p. 31.

- 15 Łódź, for example, the most westerly city of the Tsarist Empire, was so famed for its cotton production that it was dubbed 'Poland's Manchester'. The products of its mills clothed much of Russia.
- 16 A. J. P. Taylor, *The Habsburg Monarchy 1809-1918*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1990, pp. 161-3.
- 17 The Stanczyzy were a far more significant faction than any typical alliance of academics. These conservative aristocrats, centred on the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, held sway over the Polish representatives at the Vienna Reichsrat and hence, the fortunes of the Poles living in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.
- 18 J. Rostański, 'Adrian Baraniecki Twórca Muzeum Przem. 1828-1891' in *Przemysł i Rzemiosło*, 1, 1921, p. 8.
- 19 1884 Municipal Statute quoted in B. Biedrońska-Słota, *120 rocznica założenia Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowego w Krakowie* (exhibition cat.), 1988, p. 4.
- 20 1884 Municipal Statute quoted in Biedrońska-Słota, *120 rocznica założenia Muzeum Techniczno-Przemysłowego*, p. 4.
- 21 For detail of this dispute see B. Kołodziejowa, 'Miejskie Muzeum Przemysłowe im. dra Adriana Baranieckiego w Krakowie' in *Rozprawy i sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, XI, 1976, pp. 198-200.
- 22 Stryjeński designed the second structure with a reinforced concrete frame. He had introduced this building technique to Cracow in 1905 with the construction of the concert hall in the Old Theatre (*Stary Teatr*).
- 23 H. Muthesius, *Sztuka stosowana i architektura*, Muzeum Przemysłowego, Cracow, 1909, translated by J. Wachalowski.
- 24 An earlier restoration of the cathedral had been made in the sixteenth century by Italian craftsmen led by two architects, J. Cini and B. Zanobi de Gianotis. See W. Budka, 'Działalność architektów i rzemieślników przy restauracji katedry płockiej w XVI w' in *Rzeczy Piękne*, no. 5, 1925.
- 25 Viollet-le-Duc, in fact, was employed as an advisor during the rebuilding of the castle at Goluchów in 1872 and the Czartoryski Museum in Cracow in 1878. See A. Miłobędzki, *Zarys dziejów architektury w Polsce, Wiedza powszechna*, Warsaw, 1978, p. 296.
- 26 The *Górale* migrated from the East to Europe in the twelfth century. Even today they remain a distinct ethnic group within Polish society in terms of language and social codes.
- 27 Although, according to the myths which have surrounded Chałubiński's life, he first saw the Tatras as a defeated liberal in 1849 fleeing from the Habsburg authorities: the mountains offered sanctuary.
- 28 J. Bieniarzówna and J.M. Małecki, *Dzieje Krakowa*, III, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1985, p. 297; L. Długolecka and M. Pinkwart, *Zakopane-przewodnik historyczny*, Wyd. PTTK 'Kraj', Warsaw, 1989, p. 18.
- 29 See H. Kenarowna, *Od Zakopiańskiej Szkoły Przemysłu Drzewnego do Szkoły Kenera*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1978.
- 30 In fact, the mountainous region around Zakopane was virtually tax-free because the *Górale* refused to pay duties and Vienna's bureaucrats were unable to collect them.
- 31 W. L. Anezyc, 'W Tatrach', 1876, in M. Jagiełło (ed.), *Tatry w poezji i sztuce polskiej*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1975, p. 132.
- 32 H. Kenarowna, in conversation in Zakopane in October 1987.
- 33 Interest with peasant cultures in Poland was not restricted to the Zakopane region alone. Many Poles were actively recording vernacular culture in the Russian partition through associations such as the Polish Society for the Investigation of the Country (*Polskie Towarzystwo Krajoznawcze*). See M. Wawrzyniński, 'The Peasant Art of Russian Poland' in C. Holmes (ed.), *Peasant Art in Russia*, The Studio, London, 1912, pp. 35-42.
- 34 Although Witkiewicz rejected contemporary trends in painting emanating from Paris and Munich as the absurd pursuit of novelty, he was not a traditionalist. Like Ruskin (to whom he is often compared), he sought a moral and social art and design practice. He is

- renowned for an often quoted dictum: 'It is better to paint the head of a cabbage accurately than the head of Christ badly.' Accordingly he was a forceful advocate of realism in the arts and a strong critic of historicism. See W. Noakowska, *Stanisław Witkiewicz: teoretyk sztuki*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1970.
- 35 J. Topass, *L'Art et Les Artistes en Pologne du Romantisme à Nos Jours*, Librairie Félix Alcan, Paris, 1928, p. 145.
- 36 S. Eljasz-Radzikowski, *Styl Zakopiański*, Towarzystwa Wydawniczego we Lwowie, Cracow, 1901, p. 17.
- 37 A. Miłobędzki, 'Architecture in Wood Technology, Symbolic Content, Art' in *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 19, 1989, p. 181.
- 38 A. K. Olszewski, *Dzieje Sztuki Polskiej 1890-1980*, Interpress, Warsaw, 1988, p. 24.
- 39 S. Witkiewicz in W. Noakowska, *Stanisław Witkiewicz*, p. 152 (my emphasis).
- 40 T. Benton, S. Muthesius, and B. Wilkins, *Europe 1900-1914*, The Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1975, pp. 9-14.
- 41 Witkiewicz is known to have corresponded with John Ruskin and sent photographs of either vernacular Podhale designs or his own Zakopane Style projects. Unfortunately, there is no record of Ruskin's response.
- 42 S. Eljasz-Radzikowski, *Styl Zakopiański*, p. 25.
- 43 A. Székely, *Károly Kós*, Budapest, 1979.
- 44 Miłobędzki, 'Architecture in Wood ...' in *Artibus et Historiae*, no. 19, 1989, p. 200.
- 45 R. Reinfuss, 'Elementy renesansowe w polskim meblarstwie ludowym' in *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, no. 6, 1953, p. 327.
- 46 The *Fachschulen* were the technical schools established for the training of craftsmen across Austria and her Crown lands. See A.S. Levetus, 'The Craft Schools of Austria' in *The Studio*, XXXV, 1905, pp. 201-19.
- 47 S. Eljasz-Radzikowski, for example, wrote a popular guide-book to the area, *Pogląd na Tatry*, 1900, reprinted by K.A.W., Cracow, 1989.
- 48 H. Kenarowna, in conversation in October 1987, and also A. Sieradzka, *Peleryna, tren i konfederatka o modzie i sztuce polskiego modernizmu*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1991, pp. 70-7.
- 49 See B. Steinborn (ed.), *W kręgu Panoramy Raclawickiej*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1985.
- 50 See C. Milosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1983, pp. 296-9.

In dreams consoled

At the foot of Wawel Castle my father had his workshop,
A huge white, vaulted room
Alive with a big crowd of the dead;
There, a little boy, I used to wander and what I felt
I chiselled later into my art.

Stanisław Wyspiański

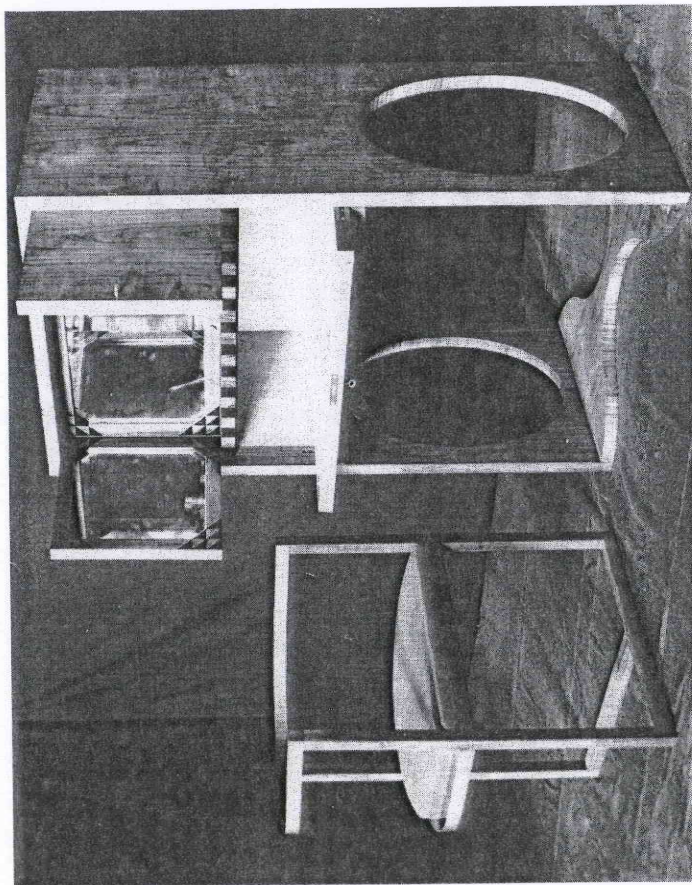
The Polish Applied Art Society

The Polish Applied Art Society (*Towarzystwo Polska Sztuka Stosowana* / TPSS), through its annual exhibitions and publications, was an important early supporter of the Zakopane Style. Whilst the activities of Stanisław Witkiewicz and his colleagues were described in its publications as 'progressive', it is the Society itself which deserved that accolade.¹ Founded in Cracow in June 1901, the TPSS brought together *Młoda Polska* (Young Poland)² designers and craftsmen imbued with the novel art and design ideologies then in circulation throughout Europe. But the philosophical foundations of the Society, both at its inception and throughout the 1900s as it moved away from its prime concerns with Polish vernacular design, can be found in a number of alien sources. John Ruskin's writings on art, architecture and craftsmanship, for example, began to be published in Poland from just before the turn of the century and William Morris's *Art and the beauty of the Earth* found a Polish publisher in the Science and Literature Association (*Związek Naukowo-Literacki*) in Łódź in 1900.³ Not coincidentally, Arts and Crafts ideas such as the concern to break the hierarchy of value in the arts, originating in Morris's and Ruskin's thought, were central to the activities of the TPSS.

From the early 1900s the Society was also influenced by Austrian enthusiasms for the applied arts. Galician artists and designers, living under Austrian rule, were keenly aware of the Vienna Secession and the place of the applied arts in its exhibitions and publications. Polish artists participated in the first Secessionist exhibition in 1898,⁴ and *Ver Sacrum*, the Secessionist's journal, was widely read through the southern partition. Although it would be difficult to identify one dominant style in the designs produced by the TPSS's membership, a significant core seem to have been strongly influenced by Austrian architects and designers. Karol Tichy, for

example, regarded by the leading historian of the Polish applied arts to be the greatest 'enthusiast for the secession style',⁵ in 1908 designed highly geometric furniture, stripped of decoration, that strongly echoed Hoffmann's designs for furniture for the Cabaret Fledermaus in Vienna of the previous year. Tichy's own home, built in Cracow in 1912, strongly resembled Hoffmann's architectural designs of the day in its 'flattened', highly stylised neo-Classicism. This house, with decorative de-capitalised 'columns' running up the façade and fluting suggested by shallow striations in the plasterwork, matched Hoffmann's designs for the Kaasgraben 'colony' of villas in Vienna of the same year. Those members of the Society who travelled through Western Europe also proved to be valuable catalysts for the insemination of novel ideas into Polish culture. Karol Frycz, for example, a graduate of academies and art schools in Vienna, London and Paris, had a typical curriculum vitae in this respect.

Foreign theories and practices reaching Poland through journals and returning designers and artists merged with corresponding native ones. The intellectual thought of Cyprian Norwid, for example, proved to be highly significant. Norwid, a poet usually associated with the neo-Romantic



7 Bedroom furniture designed by Karol Tichy and made in Andrzej Sydor's workshops, Cracow, 1908

movement in émigré Polish literature in the mid-nineteenth century, spent most of his poverty-stricken life outside Polish lands. He was regarded by his contemporaries as 'incomprehensible', and by history as one of the greatest Polish poets.⁶ His epic poem, *Promethidion*, published in exile in Paris in 1851, was a meditation on the nature of labour, beauty and art. Labour, for Norwid, a Catholic, was the consequence of Original Sin; a rupture with nature that followed the Fall. Art, i.e. human labour performed with joy and without utilitarian intent, redeems man: 'Because beauty exists to enchant and rouse to work - and work, to bring resurrection.'⁷ Society was rent between 'the people', alienated by joyless labour and the creative intelligentsia. If art was brought to the commonplace objects of life, society would find unity; the people, purpose; and mankind, redemption. As a patriot, severed from Poland by the partitions, watching growing divisions between the nobility and peasantry, and town and country, Norwid's philosophy had a national dimension:

Those nations which forgot about the uplifting function of art, which failed to establish their own art, and so failed to bring forth a chain of handicrafts - either lost their real existence or are just toiling; their work disconnected from the work of the spirit, is not more than a fatality and a penance imposed upon one social layer. The 'people', whose very souls are shaped by manual work, must, by necessity, grow further and further from those higher circles of the nation who perform only mental work. For the contents of thought obtained through manual work are different from those obtained by pure thinking. The result is that abstract thought, deprived by degrees of its ties with humble labours, return in difficult moments (i.e. politically difficult) to folk wisdom, peasant motifs, proverbs, legends or songs - even technological folk traditions. Often, it is too late, and the backbone with its marrow uniting the total sum of work in a given nation disintegrates into remembrances of the past and longing for the future.⁸

Following the poet's death and burial in a pauper's grave in Paris in 1883, his unpublished manuscripts (and drawings) were kept in store in the refuge run by Benedictine nuns where he had spent the last months of his life. Zenon Miriam Przesmycki, a Polish literary critic, recovered these unknown works and from 1901 began publishing them in his journal, *Chimera*, alongside such writers as Maurice Maeterlinck and Arthur Rimbaud. This Varsovian journal was widely read amongst *Młoda Polska* artists and writers in the southern partition. Consequently, Norwid's poetry, including *Promethidion*, was transformed into a call to action that not only rallied Arts and Crafts artists and designers around the turn of the century to 'beautify', but just as importantly, to look to vernacular sources.

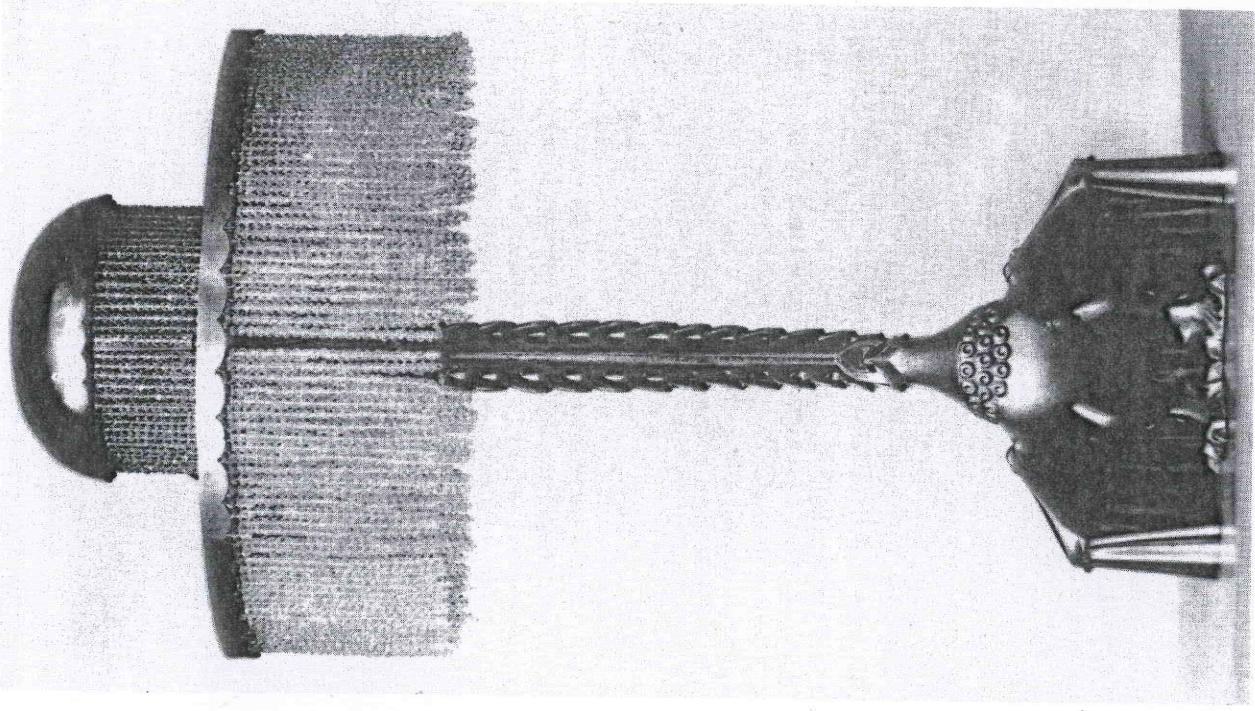
The TPSS was formed in June 1901 on the initiative of a number of youthful painters; Karol Tichy, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, Stanisław Goliński; a critic, Jerzy Warchałowski; and architects, Józef Czajkowski and Edward Trojanowski.⁹ They gathered together other artists who shared interest in various fields of the applied arts. In fact, the majority had already worked

as designers in one way or another. A leading symbolist painter, Józef Mehoffer, for example, secured a commission, in competition in 1892, to design the stained-glass windows of St Michael's church in Fribourg, Switzerland (a project that took over forty years to complete).¹⁰ The dynamism of these members obscured the relatively slight and exclusive nature of that membership, a subject of some concern to its populist founders.¹¹

One of the Society's most active founding members was Józef Czajkowski. At the time of its inception in 1901, he is reported to have: '(...) dreamt that there would be thousands of workshops in Poland: carpentry workshops, studios of rug-making, tapestry, weaving, dyeing, there would be at the same time kilns for ceramics, foundries where one could work metal and glass, work-places where one could practice wood and stone carving, (...) bookbinding, illustration, stained-glass, lace-making, toy-making (...)'.¹² Although the thousands of workshops across the nation never materialised along the Morrisian lines envisaged by Czajkowski, he accurately represented the broad range of fields in which the TPSS's membership practised: from Józef Mehoffer's highly complex and richly detailed fresco designs influenced by medievalist wall painting techniques and vernacular decorative motifs for Płock cathedral; Jan Szczepkowski's urbane metalware and electric lamps produced by the M. Jarry factory in Cracow; to Seweryn Udziela's ethnographic studies into the production of local lace (he edited a special publication concerning that topic which was published by the Society in 1905¹³). Member's designs were generally produced with the aid of a circle of commercial workshops and craftsmen, such as the cabinetmaker Andrzej Sydor or the firm of stained-glass makers, S. G. Żelenski and Co. But despite acknowledgement of the 'dignity of the work of the craftsman', the aesthetic and social relations between craftsman/maker and artist/designer were not challenged greatly by the Society (this was not to receive thorough attention until the advent of the *Warsztaty Krakowskie* (Cracow Workshops) in 1913).¹⁴ Although it should be noted that the Society, when reproducing illustrations of objects designed by its membership, always carefully acknowledged the work of any craftsmen they had commissioned.

Unlike their British kin, and whilst aware of European debates over the impact of industrialisation, the TPSS do not appear to have been greatly concerned with the 'evils' of Faustian modernity. Jerzy Warchałowski, in an issue of the Society's journal, *Materiały Polskiej Szkoły Stosowanej* (Records of Polish Applied Art), entirely given over to wooden architecture in 1905, regarded 'our stagnation' (*nasz zastój*) as a blessing in this respect:

Times have changed. New life brings new demands. Note the apartments in which people live. Wood has been substituted by brick and stone, not only in the towns and cities, but also in the villages. Fortunately these changes are not as quick here as anywhere else. The stagnancy of Polish civilisation has a positive,



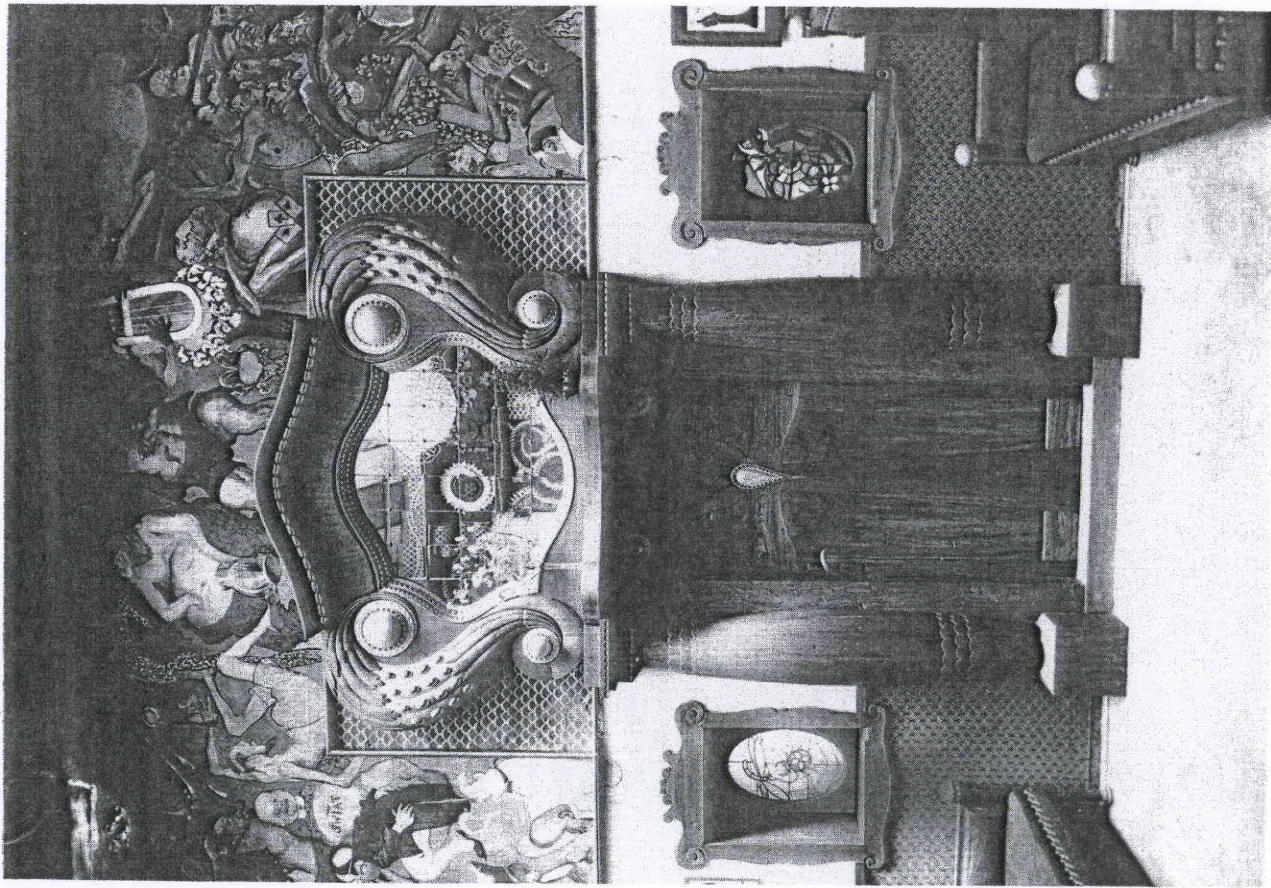
8 Table lamp designed by Jan Szczepkowski and made by the Jarry Factory, Cracow, 1909

conservatory aspect. Many beautiful invaluable examples of historical wooden architecture survive in surprising numbers.¹⁵

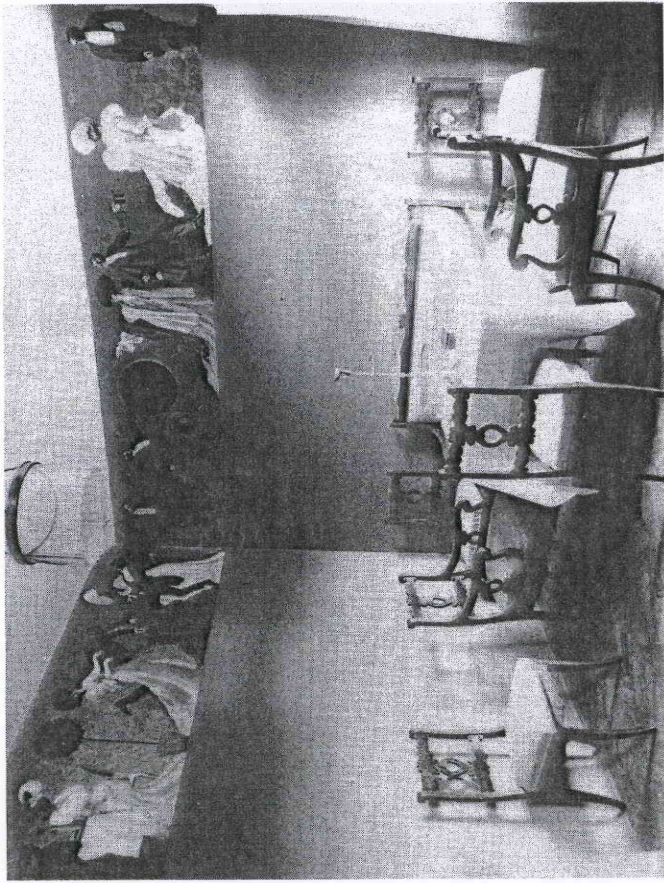
The Society's predominant concern with national expression was found in two ways. Firstly, like the supporters of Organic Work a generation earlier, they acted to protect a native culture which they saw under threat. This took a variety of forms: antiquarian concern with the venerable, notable in the attention paid to restoring the cathedral at Płock; vigilantism for the neglected (especially the vernacular); and enthusiasm for contemporary use of traditional decorative and architectural forms, for example, in the organisation and promotion of the 1908 competition to design a country manor house (*dwór wiejski*) to be built in Opinogóra in the Russian partition. And secondly, the Society sought to exert an influence on contemporary manufacturing and craftsmanship. Jerzy Warchałowski wanted to:

substitute ugliness with real beauty, rubbish with good work, fake with genuine materials, pretentiousness with simplicity, carelessness with conscientiousness, indifference with zeal, thoughtlessness with resolution, quantity with quality, boredom with new enlivening effort (...) and, finally, everything that attracts Polish artists of foreign origin with the prevailing spirit of our nation and the ideals of our leading figures.¹⁶

Furthermore, the Society took on a nationalist character in its day-to-day working practices. Beyond the clear significance of a name which stressed a country which seemed to have very little chance of being restored to the map of Europe, the TPSS also acted self-consciously across the partitions. As an example, its journal, *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, had two editors at its inception: one of whom, Edward Trojanowski, lived in Warsaw; the other, Jerzy Warchałowski, in Cracow. Similarly, its first annual exhibition in 1902 was displayed in both cities. Cracow, home to the Society, under the relatively liberal rule of an inattentive Vienna, allowed the TPSS a freedom of action that would not have been found in the German or Russian partitions. There were, in fact, individuals and societies actively seeking the revival and reform of the applied arts outside Galicia, such as the Museum of Handicraft and Applied Art (*Muzeum Rzemiosł i Sztuki Stosowanej*) in Warsaw which, like its counterpart in Cracow, ran courses and issued publications for craftsmen. But artists and designers were attracted to Galicia for the animated and conspicuously Polish culture found there in which the TPSS played an important, if sometimes rather earnest, role. This centre, though not a regional 'capital' (the Galician Diet was located in Lwów), was a magnet that drew artists, designers, writers and architects: Karol Tichy, for example, 'emigrated' from Russian Poland in 1907 (though even whilst living in Warsaw he had employed Cracovian craftsmen to execute his furniture designs); and the journal *Życie* (Life) which was published in Warsaw from 1887 reappeared in Cracow in 1897 (designed by future TPSS member Stanisław Wyspiański).¹⁷ Through the



9 Interior of Michael's Den designed by Karol Frycz (wall cartoons by Kazimierz Sichulski and others), 1911



10 Interior of the first-floor restaurant in the Old Theatre in Cracow: furnishings designed by Józef Czajkowski (wall paintings by unknown artist), late 1900s

1900s the Society became increasingly associated with Galician life, and in particular with Cracow, with its membership securing commissions for a number of major municipal and domestic interiors, such as the apartment of the town mayor designed by Józef Czajkowski in 1907. Most notable was Karol Frycz's design for Michael's Den (*Jama Michalikowa*), a cafe, completed in 1911, which was home to the celebrated and high irreverential Green Balloon (*Zielony Balonik*) cabaret.

Michael's Den was, in many respects, the home of radical *Młoda Polska* culture in all its disparities in the last decade before the First World War (Poland's own *fin de siècle*). The Green Balloon, modelled on French literary cabaret, formed the meeting-place for such diverse figures as the satirical poet and translator, Tadeusz 'Boy' Żeleński, the decadent, amoral poet Stanisław Przybyszewski and the zealous design reformer, Jerzy Warchałowski.¹⁸ Frycz designed an astonishing salon filled with enormous armchairs and sculpted inglenooks replete with symbols deformed in ways connotative of decadent Cracow: owls turning into chair-backs; huge baroque-style scrolls derived from peacock feathers; and jewel-like stained-glass windows, punctuating the walls in unexpected places, illustrating spiders and bats. The walls were decorated with strangely organic

mouldings, and wall paintings by Kazimierz Sichulski, a painter from Lwów, caricaturing local artists and writers. A *Szopka*, a traditional Christmas crib, symbolic of peasant culture in the region around Cracow, was central to Green Balloon performances as a puppet theatre. But this was not the typical Romantic embrace of the vernacular, characteristic of the TPSS, for the puppets were tart caricatures of local figures like Jacek Malczewski, the *Młoda Polska* painter and director of the Cracow Academy of Fine Arts from 1912, or familiar figures in conservative Polish society such as the priest and the bureaucrat. In fact, the audiences at the Green Balloon were often presented with sentiments quite out of kilter with the dominant patriotism of the day. The resident 'scriptwriter' at the cabaret, Tadeusz 'Boy' Żeleński, proclaimed:

I nasz naród, przy pomocy nieba
And our nation, with the help of heaven
W potęgę kilka wieków trwał;
Remained powerful for a few centuries;
Gdzie go tylko nie było potrzeba,
Wherever they were not needed
Wszędzie się polski husarz pchał;
The Polish Hussars rushed in everywhere;
Z czasem osłabł już zapach szlachcica
With time the Nobility's enthusiasm had weakened
Coraz rzadszy bywał szabli błysk:
The thinnest swords rarely sparkled:
Narodowa wciąż biła prawica,
The nation's hand continued fighting
Ale tylko biła chłopca w pyski..
But only to beat the peasants in the head!...¹⁹

The furnishing and decoration of Michael's Den saw the rare convergence of two distinct and competing cultural ideologies in the final years before the outbreak of the First World War; a tension which, as Anita Shelton has argued, divided Galician culture in the 1900s into two broad camps.²⁰ Traces of the Posivist spirit of Organic Work, in decline in literary circles since the mid-1880s, can be found in the ideology underpinning the TPSS (i.e. in its vigilance for native culture). Yet, whilst this would seem to be incompatible with the extreme 'art for art's sake' creed expounded by the demonic Stanisław Przybyszewski, nevertheless this Society, or at least some of its members, produced designs which corresponded with the spirited aesthetics of *Młoda Polska* culture. Frycz's fantastic café-salon owed more to the literary themes spinning through Cracovian culture in the 1900s turning over symbol, interiority, immorality, decadence and revived national messianism, than the pragmatic world of the Arts and Crafts from which they seemed to come.

Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej was produced by the Society under its

own imprint (*Wydawnictwo Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*) from 1902 and was edited by Edward Trojanowski and Jerzy Warchałowski (joined by Jan Bukowski, who worked in many fields of the applied arts but was renowned as a typographer, in 1907). Although published in Cracow, and initially printed there by the Jagiellonian University, its high quality photo-lithographic illustrations were printed by the firm of Angerer in Vienna from 1906. Each edition, of which there were sixteen in ten years, carried little text but a large number of thematically arranged illustrations under a brightly coloured cover usually decorated with a flower motif. The first issue, for example, displayed the simple image of a flower in a pot. Whilst, in style, this cover alluded to vernacular decoration, notably through colour and 'naïve' rhythmic motifs, the relaxed drawing technique, somewhat close to that of French post-Impressionist artists like Pierre Bonnard, betrayed the painterly sophistication of its author. It is highly likely that such an artist would have been a source of inspiration for the unacknowledged designer of this cover, for not only had most members of the TPSS travelled widely throughout Western Europe, but Feliks 'Manggha' Jasiński, a notable modern art collector in Cracow (as well as peasant art and design from across Eastern Europe), treated his impressive collection of contemporary, vernacular and historical art (including works by Bonnard) as a 'lending library' to progressive talents in the city in the 1900s.²¹

Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej provides an excellent survey of the changing interests of the Society's membership. In the first few years of publication it was predominantly concerned with vernacular designs and buildings, or objects of national historical significance. So, for example, in the fourth edition, Józef Czajkowski's photographs and drawings of a demolished Gothic timber church with a deep roof skirting the ground in Austrian Silesia were followed by illustrations of painted Easter eggs decorated with spidery pictures of birds and trees, a seasonal tradition amongst the Catholic Polish peasantry.²² In the later 1900s, as members of the TPSS began to secure prestigious commissions, *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej* became less concerned with the previously dominant themes of the vernacular and the historical, and became increasingly concerned with contemporary designs by the Society's membership. After listing a number of commissions by TPSS members in the 1906 edition, the editors wrote: 'Examples showing the development of the new artistic movement in Poland are more and more numerous' and, in fact, they renamed their journal *Sztuki Stosowanej* (Applied Art) to stress that shift. Accordingly we find illustrations of such 'contemporary' projects as Ludwik Wojtyczko's electric lighting designs for the Kopaczynski firm and Jan Szczepkowski's table lamp made by the Jarry factory in the thirteenth edition (1909). It was in such projects that Polish designers

began to concern themselves with notions of *Zeitgeist* and 'a style for the age'. Warchałowski, echoing many of his contemporaries across Europe, wrote: 'If we want to honour the past, we should learn and respect it instead of imitating it. The experiences of the past have taught us that both epochs and their geniuses usually create styles in accordance with a current spirit. It means that modern times should result in a modern style, a modern architecture.'²³

These young Polish architects and designers were searching for what they felt would be an appropriate language of form in a changing world. They self-consciously added to this responsibility, the desire to imbue design with a Polish character. Although contemporary with organisations such as the Deutscher Werkbund, the task that the TPSS set itself was not to find a language appropriate to the modern world of industry, but to a modern Poland, at that time a yearned-for abstraction. The priority of nationalist Polish designers was national expression, and not international competition in the world's markets. In 1908 Jerzy Warchałowski, a member of the Society, writing in a popular newspaper, *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (Illustrated Weekly), sought to persuade his readers that the TPSS had raised the applied arts in Poland to a 'European' standard without succumbing to Van de Velde's 'distorted, undulating lines'. Its achievement was that it 'awakens reaction and protest in the national fight for our own existence (...) for separateness (*odrębność*)'.²⁴ But in historical hindsight the significance of the TPSS, even after its decline in 1912 when it was superseded by the Cracow Workshops, was that its influence was long lasting. Not only did it act as a 'training stable' for the teaching staff in the schools of applied art and design, and other bureaucratic positions in the post-war period, but that its membership established what came to be regarded as the 'national style' after 1918.

A theatre in architecture

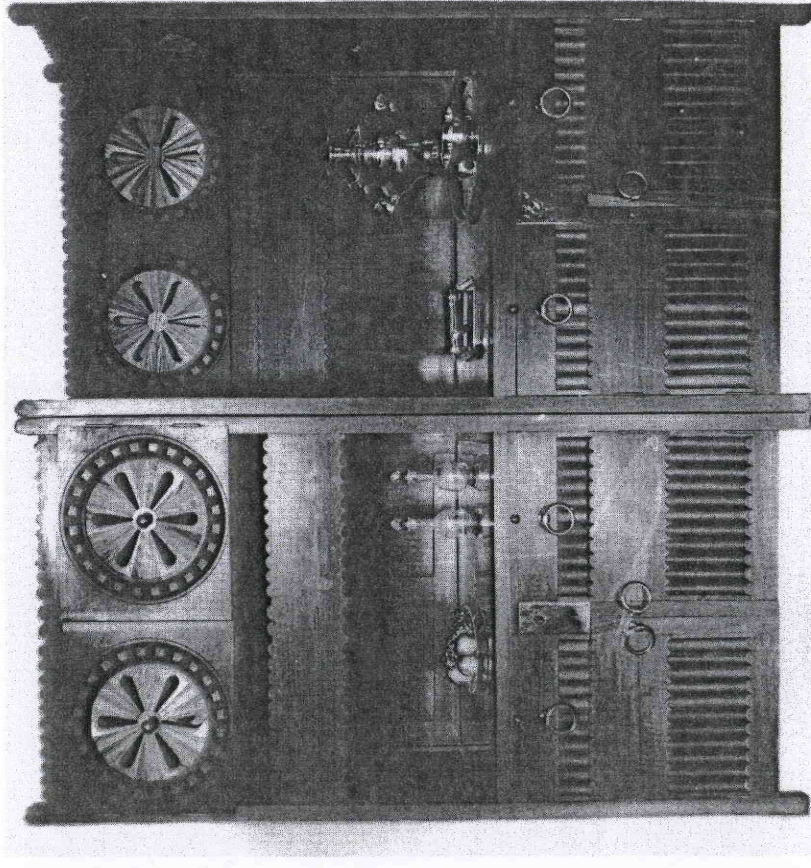
Of all the members of the TPSS, Stanisław Wyspiański warrants particular emphasis, not least because of the great influence of his ideas as a nationalist intellectual and practice as a designer. Wojciech Jastrzębowski, for example, acknowledged this when reviewing his own career as a designer in 1952:

His words to us, young apprentices of art, were confirmation of our conviction that all plastic creativity could be art. It depended on whether they were intrinsically creative or were mere imitation, masks, or the result of simple routine labour without the presence of thought. Without a doubt, in all the arts at that time, Wyspiański's activities had the decisive influence.²⁵

In the popular Polish imagination, Wyspiański is known as the greatest playwright of his age, and as an artist of *japoniste* portraits of sleeping

babes and snowy landscapes, whose life was tragically short.²⁶ But his less-known activities in the field of the applied arts were rich and diverse. He designed stained-glass windows, rugs, posters, books and journals, furniture, interiors, composed theatre sets and costumes, and restored two Gothic churches. He was a visionary whose creative imagination transcended the tendentious aspirations of other members of the TPSS. But he was an active participant in their search for modernity (*nowoczesność*) whilst maintaining Polishness (*polskość*), the archetypal tension between tradition and innovation. It is in this respect that Wyspiański is discussed here, for his thought and practice exemplifies the nationalist paradox faced by his generation which found intellectual motivation in foreign ideas yet desired national design.

As a young student of art and literature at the Cracow Academy of Fine Art and the Jagiellonian University in the late 1880s, Wyspiański was selected by his professor of painting, the national hero and celebrated



11 Cabinet designed by Stanisław Wyspiański, mid-1900s

'fourth bard', Jan Matejko, to work with him on the restoration of the Gothic Mary's Church in the centre of the city.²⁷ Under the authority of the *Młoda Polska* architect, Tadeusz Stryjeński, Wyspiański was employed to restore the fifteenth-century frescoes there. In addition he designed a long medievalist stained-glass window above the porch. This experience appears to have been the trigger for a kind of wanderlust in the twenty-two-year-old artist. Much to the disappointment of Matejko, who, as a nationalist artist, rejected the artistic trends emanating from western Europe as a dangerous distraction from Polish culture, Wyspiański undertook a journey in 1890 through southern Germany, Czechoslovakia, Switzerland and France to tour Europe's greatest Gothic cathedrals. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, under the influence, and sometimes direct participation of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, many Gothic churches were undergoing restoration. Wyspiański, on his tour, became caught up in this 'mania'. His letters, sent to the poet Lucjan Rydel in Cracow, testify to the great pleasure and sense of revelation he found in seeing veiled medieval structures and hidden original wall decoration made visible for the first time in centuries.²⁸ Furthermore, in these buildings, under the hand of the skilled craftsman, he found clear parallels with idealised notions of society and art in the Middle Ages then circulating Europe, as well as inspiration for his sketch-book and pen.

In the following year, 1891, Wyspiański returned to Paris for a second visit. He attended the Atelier de Colarossi to study painting. Although he continued to exercise his medievalist enthusiasms by sketching Parisian architecture from the Middle Ages, significantly, he came into contact with Symbolist and post-Impressionist art. He was greatly influenced by Pierre Puvis de Chevannes and worked in the Avenue de Main alongside other young 'unknowns' like Paul Serusier and Paul Gauguin. Just as importantly, Wyspiański was stimulated by the intellectual life of the French metropolis, writing: 'the circulation of ideas is the characteristic trait of Paris'.²⁹ The author of 'the bible of the symbolists', *Les Grands Initiés* (1889), Edouard Schuré, for example, proved to be a key influence on Wyspiański's thought.

In exploring oriental and classical mythology and the correspondences between religion and science, Schuré's theosophic speculation led contemporary fascination with comparative histories of religions. And furthermore, as Teresa Grzybowska has noted, Schuré shared with the Symbolists and Wyspiański a 'notion of the people (as) a *materia prima*, living in a state of chaos, having left the state of primitive harmony'.³⁰ But Wyspiański, living for most of his life not in *fin de siècle* Paris or Vienna but in a divided Poland, grafted onto this Symbolist philosophy romantic ideals about the innate 'purity' of the Polish peasantry. Like a number of Cracovian intellectuals around the turn of the century, including the painter

Włodzimierz Tetmajer and the poet, Lucjan Rydel, he married a peasant woman, Teofil Pytko. His play, *Wesele* (The Wedding, 1901), a poetic meditation on the national condition, retold the story of Rydel's marriage to a local peasant girl in Tetmajer's house in Bronowice, just outside Cracow in 1900. This complex play is loaded with national symbols, including the *Stariczek*, the tragic jester-statesman of the Jagiellonian Kings, a symbol of a partitioned Poland used by his professor, Jan Matejko (amongst others) in his painting, *Stariczek at Queen Bona's Court* (1862), and symbol, for turn of the century Galicia, of the conservatism of Organic Work. *Wesele* offers a number of readings about Cracovian society, the Polish nation in microcosm. In the context of Wyspiański's critical patriotism, the joining of an intellectual from the gentry with a peasant girl, as well as more direct reference to golden moments in history when Polish society was united, was a historical and political symbol issued to challenge the conditions that had divided gentry and peasantry since February 1846 when the peasantry rose up, Pole against Pole, to massacre the nobility.³¹ Wyspiański has the host at the wedding (Tetmajer) a Cracovian painter from a gentry family recall a real event:

They stabbed my father to death,
they beat him down with sticks and picks,
chased the bloody man through the snow ...
We have forgotten all of that.

To which the groom (Rydel) replies (referring to the Cracovian peasant tradition of wearing peacock feathers in caps):

But whenever people change,
as strange new plots are woven,
we do forget all of that:
the torture, misery and dirt;
we've put on the peacock feather.³²

Edouard Schuré was also the author of *Le Drame musical* (1875), a widely read study of Richard Wagner's operatic works, another key foreign influence upon Wyspiański's thought, and in fact, upon the whole of Symbolist Europe; Baudelaire, Mallarmé, Claudel and others. In Wyspiański's youth, Wagner's operas were not played in Cracow's theatres (the city's opera house was not opened until 1893), but his polemics animated the musical debates of this, the most self-obsessed of cities. Wyspiański was intellectually stimulated by Wagnerian aesthetics as a youth, writing in his sketch-book in 1885: '(Schuman) said about Wagner's Lohengrin, "It is a music which will be particularly to the liking of painters." Did Schuman mean to say that Wagner violates music, wanting it to become perforce what poetry and partly also painting are?'³³ And in 1890, during his year of travels, he was finally able to see performances

of most of Wagner's works. Tymon Terlecki, an authority on Wyspiański's dramatic works, has suggested that he was 'struck by Wagner's idea of achieving that harmonious fusion of all artistic means in the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, a work embracing all the existing arts.'³⁴ The notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, originating in three essays by Wagner in 1849 and 1851 became, by the end of the century, a leitmotiv for the Arts and Crafts and Secessionist movements in Europe.³⁵ Consequently, decadent *fin de siècle* Vienna found a point of correspondence with the pious Chipping Campdenites in their shared claims to treat all areas of life as art.

The influence of Viollet-le-Duc, Schuré and Wagner upon Wyspiański was by no means exclusive and a great number of other figures could be cited here. But through them it is possible to illustrate how 'alien' theories affected this Cracovian artist and designer, resulting in one of the most vital nationalist works in the applied arts in the last years of the partitions. In 1895 Wyspiański secured a commission to restore and decorate the interior of the medieval church of St Francis in Cracow.³⁶ According to his friend, the *Młoda Polska* poet Stanisław Przybyszewski, he had been searching for such an opportunity with which to exercise his ideas.³⁷ This desire was no doubt prompted by Viollet-le-Duc and his followers in France. But it should be noted that Wyspiański was only partially in favour of their activities.³⁸ Nevertheless, on receiving the Franciscan commission he re-examined Viollet-le-Duc's *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècles*.³⁹ Wyspiański composed fresco decoration for every wall surface of the church, even the star-bedecked ceiling of the vestibule. Following Gothic notions of the hierarchy of decoration, those parts of the church closest to the altar were subject to the most elaborate and colourful treatment. But Wyspiański was more concerned with the spirit of the Gothic than the letter. He covered the walls with a richly coloured rhythmic 'garden' of intertwining and stylised floral motifs; lilies, daisies, irises. Around the presbytery the decorative treatment intensified with taut geometric motifs derived from peacock feathers and folk art, and strangely distorted regal Polish eagles. Under Schuré's influence, Wyspiański's Symbolist imagination came to the fore in the church's vividly coloured stained-glass windows. In an Ascension scene Christ was depicted as Dionysios, and God the Father, with raised hand in a gesture of judgement, sat like Neptune ready to flood the world with brilliant azure waves.

Wyspiański, although a central figure in the Polish Arts and Crafts, in this *Gesamtkunstwerk* reinvested that concept with some of its Wagnerian intent. Not only did he regard the whole church as worthy of an artist's attention, but more importantly he gave it a particularly theatrical treatment: the drama to be enacted was that of Polish national revival. His rich Symbolist language turned this church into a temple of Polish messianism:



12 Wall decoration designed by Stanisław Wyspiański for the Franciscan Church, Cracow, 1904

crowned eagles, the symbol of Poland's elected monarchy and the 'golden ages' associated with it; peacock feathers, connotative of Kościuszko's Cracow;⁴⁰ and a ghostly Saint Salomea, who gave up her royal birthright as a Polish princess in the thirteenth century, after her husband was killed in battle with the Tartars, to become a Franciscan nun, casting her crown to the ground. Through the inspiration of 'alien' sources Wyspiański created a contemporary language of form, replete with national codes and symbols against the historicist grain. In discussing his literary art, Czesław Miłosz has argued that as a leading exponent of the Polish Symbolist movement, Wyspiański regenerated the 'art for art's sake' tendencies within *Młoda Polska* culture by developing a new language of commitment: the same can be said for his activities as a designer.⁴¹ The Franciscan church, completed in 1897, was not an isolated incident in the career of this member of the TPSS, but a clear example of a pattern of inspiration found in all the projects that he undertook until his death at thirty-eight in 1907.

The Cracow Workshops

The TPSS were the first of a number of 'progressive' groups concerned with applied art to be founded in the years before the First World War. The Society of Podhale Art (*Towarzystwo Sztuka Podhalańska*), for example, was founded in January 1909 by followers of Stanisław Witkiewicz to continue the work of maintaining the contemporary artistic culture of the region around Zakopane. Another Zakopane-based society, the Kilim Association (*Stowarzyszenie Kilim*), was founded in April 1910. It sought to promote traditional kilim weaving techniques by employing naturally dyed materials with innovative artistic designs. The TPSS, in the cultural capital of Cracow, acted as a kind of parent organisation to such smaller groups, and other artists and designers. The most influential association of design activists founded in these years was the Cracow Workshops.⁴² It was formed from the waning TPSS by some of its most committed members.

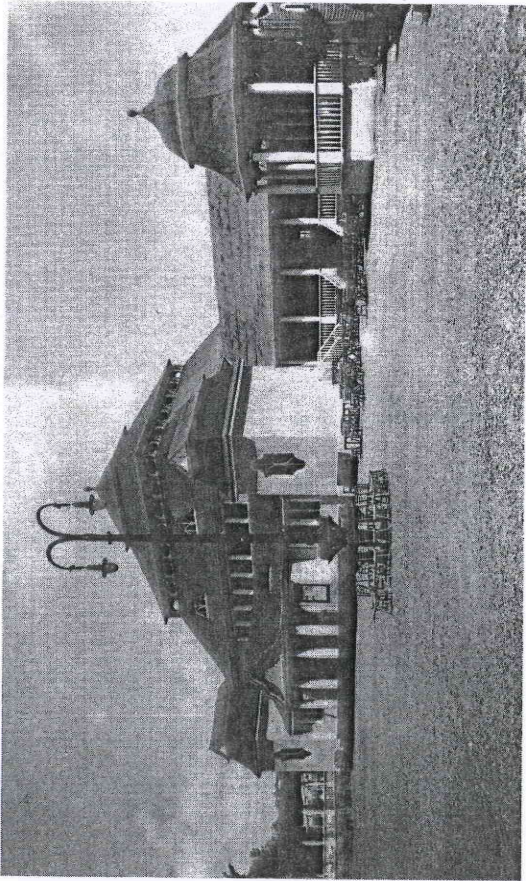
One of the last and most consequential actions of the TPSS was the joint organisation (with the Delegation of Polish Architects / *Delegacja Architektów Polskich*) of an exhibition in the summer of 1912 called 'Architecture and Interiors in Gardens' (*Architektura i wnętrza w otoczeniu ogrodu*). This exhibition was inspired by a complex of 'foreign' and 'advanced' notions promoted by the then well-established Arts and Crafts Movement across Europe. Not surprisingly, in this 1912 exhibition in Jordan Park (*Park Jordana*) in Cracow, one can find clear parallels with such precedents as the 1908 Kunstschau exhibition in Vienna organised by Josef Hoffmann and his Wiener Werkstätte colleagues.⁴³ Above all the exhibition was dedicated to an 'idea of the garden city' (*idea miast ogrodów*),⁴⁴ a theme which had originated in Germany and Austria, and

Britain in the last years of the nineteenth century under the influence of figures like Ebenezer Howard and Camillo Sitte, and which, by the early years of the twentieth century, had great European currency.

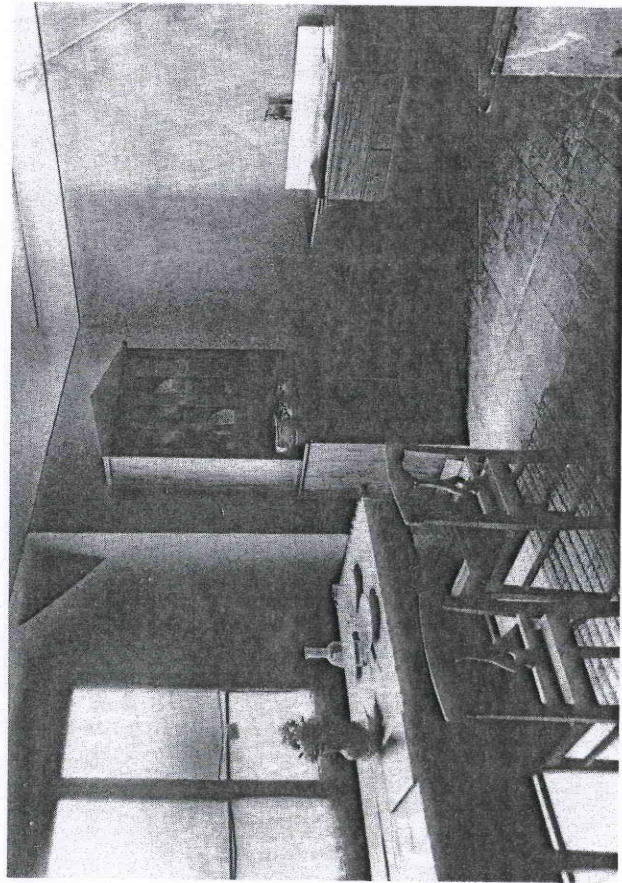
Architecture and Interiors in Gardens was organised under the direction of Władysław Ekielski and Tadeusz Stryjeński, both respected architects and members of the TPSS (Stryjeński had also been the Director of the Museum of Industry between 1907–1910). The other figures behind this initiative included Warchałowski, Franciszek Mączyński, Adolf Szyzsko-Bohusz and Józef Czajkowski: later all to be highly active members of the Cracow Workshops. The Cracow city council provided the site, a public park, and the Chamber of Trade and Industry (*Izba Handlowa i Przemysłowa*) was the exhibition's major sponsor.⁴⁵ Like its Viennese counterpart four years earlier, this 1912 exhibition displayed many of the aesthetic trappings of the age, with sculptural fountains and picturesque stalls selling flowers and sheet music of the latest modish dances from Vienna. But the strong social commitment evinced there was more noteworthy. The catalogue stressed the 'search for new forms of practical, healthy and aesthetic living ... (for) ... all sections of Polish society.'⁴⁶ The main pavilion, designed by Józef Czajkowski and Ludwik Wojtycko in an exaggerated *Dwór* (Manor House) style, displayed a number of innovative architectural projects from all three partitions: for example, Henryk Uziembło's theatrical design for a sanatorium in Zakopane commissioned by K. Dłuski was on show. It also housed an electrical 'fountain of light' exhibited by the German Siemens company. Despite the novelty of such futuristic exhibits, the artefacts and edifices which held the greatest importance for the history of design in Poland were the various housing types designed for different social groups. Four family homes were on display in Jordan Park; for an urban professional, a town worker, a craftsman and a peasant.

The interior of the home for the middle-class family, a two-storey building in a manor house (*dworek szlachecki*) style, was furnished with highly sophisticated items produced by master craftsmen. A Warsaw architect, Edward Trojanowski, designed the contents of the master bedroom in the decorative language of a modern Biedermeier. This furniture, produced by the firm of Niemczykowski and Sons of Cracow, carefully stressed subtle distinctions in material and techniques through excellent marquetry and polished wood surfaces. Trojanowski, through his cabinetmaker, displayed both technical virtuosity and modish sensibility in these urbane arrangements of geometric forms which alluded to Biedermeier tradition. But despite this exhibition's claims to being engaged in a search for the new, Trojanowski had barely departed from tradition.

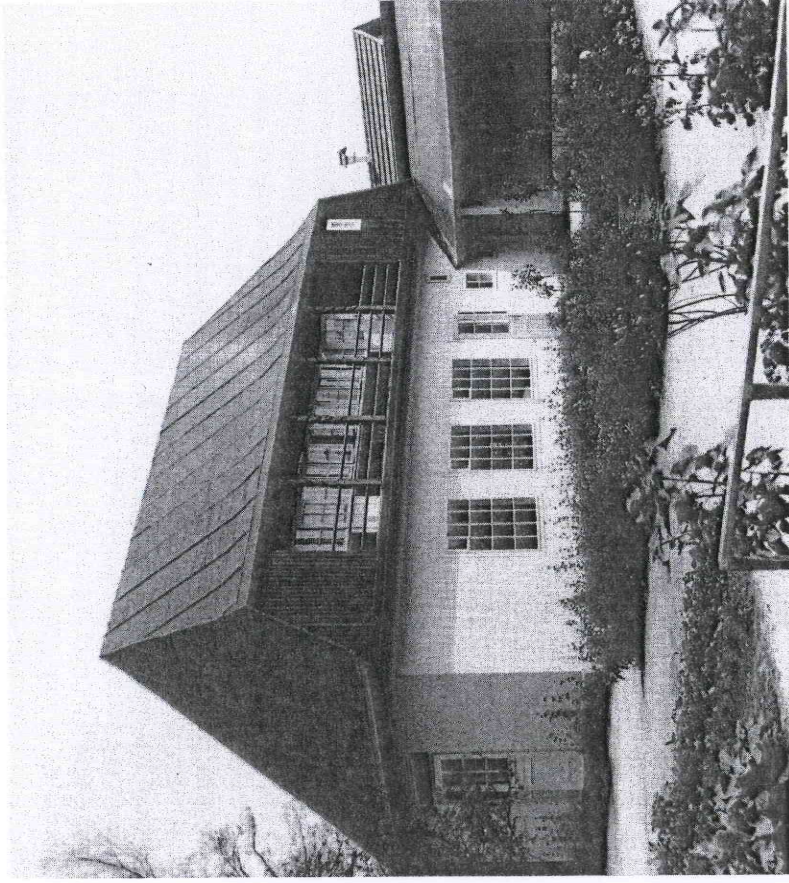
In contrast, Adolf Szyzsko-Bohusz's house for a craftsman and his family struck an attitude that was to lie at the heart of the Cracow Workshops. Szyzsko-Bohusz, a graduate of the St Petersburg Academy, and for much



13 The main pavilion of the 'Architecture and Interiors in Gardens' exhibition designed in a *dwór* style by Józef Czajkowski and Ludwik Wojtyczko, Cracow, 1912



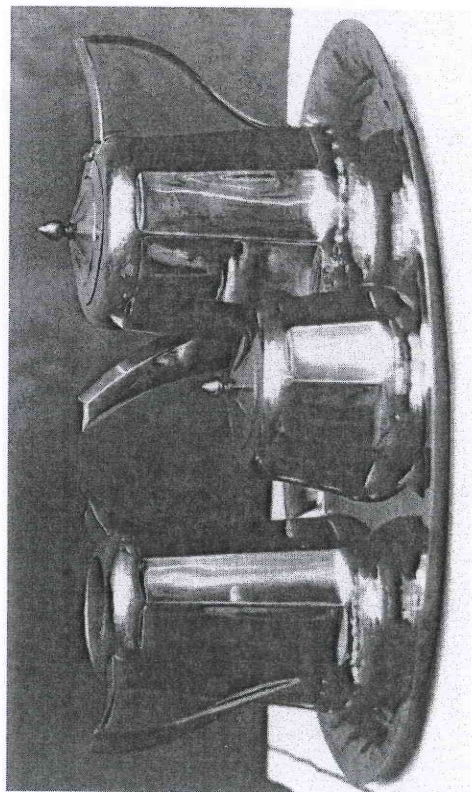
14 Kitchen in the worker's cottage at the 'Architecture and Interiors in Gardens' exhibition designed by Zdzisław Mączyński and made by Ambroży Chrobak and Józef Kobos, Cracow, 1912



15 Craftsman's cottage at the 'Architecture and Interiors in Gardens' exhibition designed by Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, Cracow, 1912

of his professional career as an architect an advocate and practitioner of classical styles, built this cottage for a carpenter and his family with very particular notions of the ascetic life of the artisan in mind.⁴⁷ This unadorned brick-walled and wooden-roofed building housed a workshop on the ground floor and living space above which was arranged with the collaboration of the Museum of Industry. This large upper room was characterised by an atmosphere of virtue and utility: beds were tucked into alcoves under stained-glass windows depicting the Virgin Mary. Life for the carpenter, who was provided with a small plot of land to grow vegetables, was to be self-sufficient. Furthermore, although renowned as an enthusiast for architectural history, in fashioning this modest home from a plain cube with a prominent upright roof, Szyszko-Bohusz prefigured some of Modernism's expressed concern with simplicity and order. Like his contemporary Paul

Schultz-Naumburg in Germany,⁴⁸ he had found in the vernacular, in this case the typical peasant cabin (*chata*) found across southern Poland, not a picturesque decorative language, but a paradigm, drawn from local tradition, for practical housing. Karol Maszkowski, Szyzsko-Bohusz's collaborator in this project, designed simple furniture for the home which was produced by Michał Marchewczyk's workshop at the Museum of Industry. These solid chairs with straight legs and an unyielding slatted seat were allowed the sole luxury of a restrained heart motif for a chair-back. A range of Arts and Crafts enthusiasms and prejudices was reflected in Szyzsko-Bohusz and Maszkowski's designs: from the belief in the essentially humble aspirations of the artisanal working classes to a notion of the unity of art and life.



16 Metalware made in the studios of the Museum of Industry to Kazimierz Młodzianowski's designs and under the technical direction of W. Jaroszewski, 1912

The Cracow Workshops were established in January 1913 by artists, craftsmen and art historians on a similar pattern of belief.⁴⁹ To stress the formation of the Workshops by official statute, i.e. a specific event, would be misleading.⁵⁰ The first practical studios had been established within the Museum in 1909 when the institution was still located on its original site in the Franciscan cloisters in the city. Furthermore, future members of the association had worked for a number of years (whilst members of the TPSS), both within and outside the Museum; Kazimierz Młodzianowski, a painter, and Wacław Jaroszyński, a metalworker, for example, had directed production of metalware items in the Museum's studios that were illustrated in the pages of *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*⁵¹ and exhibited at the *Wystawa Sztuki Kościelnej* (Exhibition of Church Art) in Cracow in

1911. When the Museum relocated to Smoleńsk St within months of the Cracow Workshops' inception in 1913, members contributed designs for the furnishing of many of the new interiors. The Librarian's office, for example, was furnished with armchairs made from light wood and upholstered in leather that were designed by Karol Stryjeński and made in the Museum's furniture workshop.

The decision to establish an association of craftsmen and designers lay in the intellectual dissatisfaction felt by some of the most active members of the TPSS with the exclusive working methods and products of that society.⁵² The Cracow Workshops was conceived as a 'collaboration between artists and craftsmen.' Its founding statute, published in April 1913, stated: 'The aim of this association is in the first place to create a centre which concentrates the efforts of artists, people who believe in furthering the industrial arts, and craftsmen to enoble production through handicraft, the object of which is to make goods for sale (...) articles and objects from a range of ennobling professional handicrafts.'⁵³ The Cracow Workshops were not only concerned with the relations of production. Their actions were inspired by the belief that art should be brought to all people, in all spheres of life, through their material possessions. With social concern, and echoing Cyprian Norwid, they saw all the 'arts' as 'the psychic health of the nation'. Galicia, flooded with imports from the industrial manufacturing regions of the Dual Monarchy was, they believed, distracted by the alluring products of mechanised industry and alien commerce. The novel aspect of this thesis, which was, in effect, a nineteenth-century nationalist concept stressing the political value of culture, lay in its populist applica-



17 Ex libris designed for the Museum of Industry in Cracow designed by Karol Homolacs

tion to the commonplace things of daily life. In this respect, the considered strategies of the Cracow Workshops followed a pattern underlying most of the nationalist design practices described so far: they grafted Polish concerns on to contemporary pan-European themes. As Józef Mrozek has shown, the leading Arts and Crafts and proto-Modernist agencies of design reform in each of the partitioning countries; the Wiener Werkstätte, the Deutscher Werkstätten, Abramtsevo and Talashkino in Russia, each influenced the Workshops' ideology.⁵⁴ A Warsaw newspaper, *Świat* (World), reporting the Cracow Workshops' first year of activity, emphasised characteristics that could have equally described these other European Arts and Crafts 'workshops':

A new agent of creativity, both serious and well conceived has been founded in Cracow. Its range - domestic appliances, artistic goods, applied art - follows slogans of refined form, good taste, the use of appropriate materials following technical development (...). This new association (...), founded modestly with little official capital, thanks to good administration and good fortune has established itself as a dynamic enterprise (...).⁵⁵

Despite ready access to the Museum's studios, the Cracow Workshop's activities in the short period between their inception and the outbreak of the war were of a restricted nature. Although they expressly aimed to produce complete interiors embracing all fields of the crafts, initial workshop production was limited to kilims, graphic design and metalware. In the course of the twenty-one months before the outbreak of war, the Workshops had only one 'official' opportunity to display their wares. At the spring salon of the Society of Friends of Art (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych*) in Cracow in 1914, they exhibited a slight range of domestic metalware (some of which had been produced before the Workshops' inception). These hand-beaten brass and copper vessels were modest testimony to the aspirations of the group. Greater effort was invested in theorising and propagandising work. Although this fellowship did not issue ringing manifestos, members like the sculptor Włodzimierz Konieczny, embroiled theories of craft production in the *Krakowski Miesięcznik Artystyczny* (Cracow Artistic Monthly). Others, such as Stanisław Till, were more concerned with developing methods for teaching craft skills as the Workshops inherited responsibility for the educational programme for craftsmen at the Museum of Industry.⁵⁶

The outbreak of the First World War checked the development of the Workshops, not least because many of its members were drafted into the Austro-Hungarian Army. Konieczny, its leading theorist, was killed in action in 1916. The war did not force the closure of the Museum, nor the Workshops: its furniture and batik studios continued to function throughout the conflict. In March 1918 some of the products of wartime practice were displayed in an exhibition of nine interiors designed by Józef

Czajkowski at the Palace of Art (*Palac Sztuki*) in Cracow (which subsequently provided the illustrations for a small monograph on Czajkowski⁵⁷). Produced in the 'most difficult conditions of war',⁵⁸ these sober designs were guided by a simple geometry and modest craftsmanship. In their first five years of existence, hampered by the conditions of partition and the war, the Cracow Workshops had made little mark on Polish culture. It was not until the end of the war and the restoration of the Polish State, that they were able to make their impact on design.

Notes

- 1 J. Warchałowski, 'Editorial' in *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, no. 8/9, 1906.
- 2 Polish literary and cultural historians have adopted the name 'Młoda Polska' (Young Poland) as a descriptive monicker for broad fields of symbolist literature, fine art and design around the turn of the century (although it should also be noted that this broad term has been subdivided into a number of phases). In terms of design, the name shares a common emphasis on youth and stylistic innovation with *Art Nouveau*, *Secessionstil*, *Jugendstil* and *Stile Liberty* and, in many respects, *Młoda Polska* held common characteristics with these various movements too. But this Polish variant also emphasised its national character. The 'art for art's sake' notion underlying many of the highly aesthetic items produced in this pan-European style had little impact upon designers and theoreticians in Poland (bar the conspicuous example of Stanisław Przybyszewski). *Młoda Polska*, a name coined by Artur Górski, the editor of *Życie*, a Cracovian journal, in 1897, incorporated a diverse range of proto-Modernist cultural activities which broadly met in rejecting realist modes in the arts, disdaining the compromising politics of Organic Work in politics and a ready deployment of symbols. The TPSS were the leading group of Młoda Polska designers and craftsmen. See T. Dobrowolski, *Sztuka Młodej Polski*, Państwowe Wyd. Naukowe, Cracow, 1963.
- 3 The first book to be published on Ruskin's thought in Polish was R. de la Sizerane, *Ruskin i kult Piękne*, 1898, translated by A. Potocki.
- 4 S. Wyspiański letter to L. Rydel (2 May 1897), acknowledging an invitation to Vienna, in *Listy Stanisława Wyspiańskiego do Lucjana Rydla*, I, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1979, pp. 455-7.
- 5 I. Huml, *Polska sztuka stosowana XX wieku*, Wyd. Artystyczne i Filmowe, Warsaw, 1978, p. 36.
- 6 Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, p. 274. See also: G. Gömöri, *Cyprian Norwid*, Twayne, New York, 1974, and B. Mazur and G. Gömöri (eds.), *Norwid*, Orbis, London, 1988.
- 7 C. Norwid, 'Promethidion' extract quoted in Gömöri, *Cyprian Norwid*, p. 31.
- 8 C. Norwid, quoted in Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, p. 274.
- 9 All of these architects and artists were born in the 1870s, bar Tetmajer who was something of the Society's elder figure, being born in 1861.
- 10 H. Faryna, 'Ensemble de vitraux Modern Style de la collegiale de Fribourg' in *Polish Art Studies*, VI, 1985, p. 255.
- 11 J. Warchałowski, 'Editorial' in *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, no. 8/9, 1906, p. 2.
- 12 The TPSS's 'diarist' (*pamiętnikarz*), probably the historian Karol Potkański, recalling Czajkowski's words in Dobrowolski, *Sztuka Młodej Polski*, p. 379.
- 13 S. Udziela *Hafy ludowe krakowskie*, Cracow, 1905.
- 14 Warchałowski, *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, 1906, p. 1.
- 15 J. Warchałowski, 'Editorial' in *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, no. 6, 1905, p. 1.
- 16 Warchałowski, *Materiały Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej*, 1905, p. 1.

- 17 It should be noted that the TPSS took the opportunity to spread their influence in the Russian partition also. In 1908 they held a group exhibition of their work in the applied arts at the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw which included extensive decoration of the exhibition hall. See *Materiały Polskiej Szkoły Sztuki Stosowanej*, no. 10, 1908, and *Wystawa Krakowskiego Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana*, (Zachęta gallery exhibition cat.), 1908.
- 18 See T. Weiss, *Legenda i prawda Zielonego Balonika*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1987, and J. P. Gawlik, *Powrót do Jamy*, W.A.G., Cracow, undated.
- 19 Tadeusz 'Boy' Żeleński's satirical lyric sung at the Green Balloon cabaret quoted in Gawlik, *Powrót do Jamy*, p. 138.
- 20 A. K. Shelton, *The Democratic Idea in Polish History and Historiography: Franciszek Bujał (1875-1953)*, Eastern European Monographs, Boulder, 1989, pp. 1-2.
- 21 S. Kozakowska, *Manggha*, catalogue to the exhibition at the National Museum in Cracow, 1990, pp. 16-17.
- 22 It is interesting to note that the TPSS did not restrict their national 'vigilantism' to a single area of the partitions. They were key agents, for example, in promoting interest in the folk art paper 'cut-outs' of the Łowicz region, then under the rule of the Tsar.
- 23 Warchałowski, *Materiały Polskiej Szkoły Sztuki Stosowanej*, 1905, p. 1.
- 24 J. Warchałowski, 'Polska sztuka stosowana' in *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 8 February 1908, p. 106.
- 25 W. Jastrzębowski, 'Geneza, program i wyniki działalności "Warsztatów Krakowskich" i "Ładu"' in *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, no. 1, January - February 1952, p. 12.
- 26 To say that Wyspiański was very active during his short life (1869-1907) would be an extreme under-exaggeration and so his output cannot be recorded with any justice here. See Z. Kępiński, *Stanisław Wyspiański*, K.A.W., Warsaw, 1984; E. Skierkowska, *Plastyka Stanisława Wyspiańskiego*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1958; and T. Terlecki, *Stanisław Wyspiański*, Twayne, New York, 1983. Although he did not write an autobiography, his letters sent to Lucjan Rydel between 1890 and 1906 form an excellent personal record of the period of his greatest creativity. See *Listy Stanisława Wyspiańskiego do Lucjana Rydla*, I and II, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1979.
- 27 When Matejko displayed his rousing history painting *The Battle of Grunwald* in 1878, according to art historical legend, his audience responded by offering him a royal sceptre, a gesture intended to convey upon him the status of a national leader. As 'fourth bard' he joined an exclusive club of national romantic poets; Adam Mickiewicz, Juliusz Słowacki, and Zygmunt Krasiński. See H. Gotlib, *Polish Painting*, Minerva, London, 1942, pp. 41-3.
- 28 S. Wyspiański's letter to L. Rydel (22 May 1890) describes the church of St Denis in Paris then under restoration under the auspices of Viollet-le-Duc in Wyspiański, *Listy*, I, 1979, p. 38.
- 29 S. Wyspiański quoted in S. Przybyszewski, *Stanisław Wyspiański: dzieła malarzkie*, Inst. Wyd. 'Biblioteka Polska', Warsaw, 1925, p. 89.
- 30 T. Grzybowski, 'Wyspiański dans la cercle des Grands Initiés' in *Polish Art Studies*, X, 1989, p. 322. In his play *Wesele* (The Wedding), Wyspiański, through the voice of his leading character, a poet and groom (modelled on his friend, Lucjan Rydel), reflecting on his wedding guests, the local peasantry, expresses this sentiment: 'My life was like a straight-jacket, surrounded by mildewed walls, everything was old and gray; now everything has become young. I've found a living beauty, I'm inhaling this young life. Now I look and keep on looking at these ruddy, colourful folk; they're so lively, they're so healthy, even though they're coarse and rude.' In S. Wyspiański, *The Wedding*, 1901, English edition translated by G.T. Kapolka, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1990, p. 53.
- 31 The 'Shroveite' rebellion took place in the Tamowa and Jasielski regions and was incited by the Habsburg authorities who paid a bounty for the heads of those Polish nobles whom they regarded as potential insurgents.
- 32 Wyspiański, *The Wedding*, p. 73.
- 33 S. Wyspiański, quoted in Terlecki, *Stanisław Wyspiański*, p. 14.
- 34 S. Wyspiański, quoted in Terlecki, *Stanisław Wyspiański*, p. 14.

- 35 R. Wagner, *Die Kunst und die Revolution*, 1849; *Das Kunstwerk der Zukunft*, 1849; and *Oper und Drama*, 1851.
- 36 Z. Dmochowski, *The Architecture of Poland*, Polish Research Centre, London, 1956, p. 50.
- 37 Przybyszewski, *Stanisław Wyspiański*, p. 91.
- 38 Wyspiański, *Listy*, II, footnote 2, p. 55.
- 39 Wyspiański, *Listy*, I, p. 283, (letter 39).
- 40 Tadeusz Kościuszko led the National Rising of 1794 from Cracow and has been regarded ever since as one of the greatest heroes of Polish history.
- 41 Miłosz, *The History of Polish Literature*, p. 358.
- 42 It should be noted that in 1909, before the formation of the Cracow Workshops, many members of the TPSS and figures associated with the Museum of Industry were active in an organisation called *Związek ARMR (Architektura, Rzeźba, Malarstwo, Rzemiosło)* (ARMR Association (Architecture, Sculpture, Painting and Craft)). In 1911 they organised an exhibition of church art in Cracow which included works of applied art produced in the Museum workshops that prefigured the actions of the Cracow Workshops.
- 43 J. Kalir, *Viennese Design and the Wiener Werkstätte*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1986, p. 62.
- 44 *Katalog wystawy architektury i wnętrza w otoczeniu ogrodowym*, 1912, p. 15.
- 45 The Chamber of Trade and Industry proved itself to be a great supporter of the Polish applied arts, and the TPSS, by commissioning a number of the Society's members to design its *Młoda Polska* offices in Cracow. See Z. Beiersdorf & J. Puchla, *Dom pod globusem*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1988.
- 46 *Katalog wystawy architektury i wnętrza w otoczeniu ogrodowym*, 1912, p. 15.
- 47 See M. Lisowska, *Działalność architektoniczna Adolfa Szyszko-Bohusza na tle epoki*, unpublished PhD thesis, Jagiellonian University, Cracow, 1973.
- 48 Benton et al., *Europe 1900-1914*, p. 44.
- 49 The founders of the Cracow Workshops numbered twenty-one; four painters, Karol Homolacs, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Kazimierz Młodzianowski, and Kazimierz Wiktewicz, three sculptors, Stanisław Getter, Włodzimierz Konieczny and Henryk Kunzek; three cabinetmakers, Feliks Budziaszek, Ambroży Chrobak, and Janusz Hanuszkiewicz; two bronze founders, Antoni Chrostek and Ludwik Namysłowski; a master metalworker, Andrzej Gorecki; a silversmith, Jan Ludwik; a silversmith, Aleksander Maciejowski; two bookbinders, Franciszek Wolański and Bonawentura Lenart; a ceramicist, Zofia Szydłowska; two pedagogues, Zofia Hunkiewicz and Julian Pagaczewski, and the director of the Museum of Industry, Stanisław Till. By the outbreak of the First World War the membership had increased to forty-eight.
- 50 See *Statut Stowarzyszenia "Warsztaty Krakowskie" w Krakowie*, Cracow, 1913.
- 51 *Materiały Polskiej Szkoły Sztuki Stosowanej*, no. 12, 1913, p. 12.
- 52 This suggests that the founders of the Cracow Workshops constituted a wing of the TPSS which, like the supporters of Organic Work before them, evinced a pragmatic and socially orientated attitude to the applied arts, akin to other late Arts and Crafts designers in Europe.
- 53 The founding statute of the Cracow Workshops quoted in I. Huml, *Warsztaty Krakowskie*, Polska Akademia Nauk, Warsaw, 1973, p. 50.
- 54 J. Mrozek, *Polskie meblarstwo artystyczne w dwudziestolecie międzywojennym*, unpublished MA thesis, Warsaw University, 1973, pp. 15-19.
- 55 Unacknowledged author, *Świat*, no. 27, 1914, pp. 8-10, quoted in Huml, *Warsztaty Krakowskie*, p. 57.
- 56 S. Till, *Powstanie Muzeum Przemysłowego i Krajowego Instytutu Popierania Rękodzieł i Przemysłu w Krakowie. Przyszłość, stan obecny, ogólne sprawowanie za 1911 do 1913, szkic planu na przyszłość*, Muzeum Przemysłowe, Cracow, 1914.
- 57 J. Warchałowski, *Wnętrza i meble projektował Józef Czajkowski*, Muzeum Przemysłowe, Cracow, 1920.
- 58 Warchałowski, *Wnętrza i meble projektował Józef Czajkowski*, p. 5.

The Cracow School and the Second Republic

Poland yes, but of what kind?
Joachim Lelewel

Poland restored

The revival of Poland's statehood at the end of the First World War, although long dreamed of and toiled for, was unexpected. Pre-1914 nationalist struggles to wrench free from the grip of the partitioning powers had only an indirect relationship with the events of November 1918. Neither did the actions of the victorious powers directly result in this restitution. Poland was reborn in abandonment. The defeat of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies and the October Revolution in Russia left a political vacuum which had been congested for 123 years by the partitions. Marshal Józef Piłsudski, the commander of the partisan Polish Legions (which had fought the first three years of the war aligned with Austro-Hungary, but on the side of the nation), was able to unilaterally announce the birth of the Second Polish Republic. Although the notion of a 'united, independent and autonomous Poland' with 'free and secure access to the sea' had been one of American President Woodrow Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' of January 1917, the signatories at Versailles in June 1919 were presented with a *fait accompli*. The rebirth of the Polish phoenix from the ashes of war was met with some international consternation, with David Lloyd George calling Poland 'a historic failure',¹ though to the nation it represented the greatest possible confirmation of the worth of decades of national struggle and sacrifice. The sense of joy felt by Poles was, no doubt, tempered by the enormous difficulties facing the nation in the first years after the war. Set in quite different national boundaries, Poland fell into a number of minor wars with her neighbours. Between the Armistice and the settlement of the Polish constitution in March 1921, Piłsudski took Poland into small-scale conflicts in the Ukraine, Posnania, Silesia, Lithuania, and Cieszyn (Tešín) over territory, and with Lenin's Russia which aimed to take its Bolshevik revolution westwards, whilst he wished to restore the borders of the old *Respublica*.

The economic problems facing the young State were almost as grave as

the threat issued by her belligerent neighbours. The battlefronts of the First World War had moved back and forth across her territories destroying property and industry. The tri-partition left its legacy too, notably in terms of underdevelopment. Łódź, the second largest Polish city with a population of 600,000, still lacked drains or a municipal water supply as late as 1914.² The new country also found itself with three different economic systems, each orientated to the departed partitioning powers. Industries could no longer rely on traditional markets. Łódź, a cotton-producing city, for example, could not sell its cloth to Russia, a market over which it held a virtual monopoly under the Tsar. The confusion which the State inherited in 1918 is well illustrated by the circumstances of the railway system serving the newly mapped Polish lands. Wagons and engines from different partitions were incompatible: there were two different track gauges; three types of signalling systems; and 160 different types of locomotives.³ A traveller could not catch a train between Kielce and Cracow, two major cities less than 120 kilometres apart. Beset with such pronounced infrastructural difficulties, Polish economic improvement was painfully slow throughout the inter-war period. Gross industrial production did not revive to 1913 levels until as late as 1938.⁴

The Polish State in 1918 found itself ruling over a number of different ethnic groups, including Ukrainians and Byelorussians, who both voiced secessionist aspirations. Piłsudski, like Cyprian Norwid and other Polish nationalists in the nineteenth century, had evinced idealistic notions of a revived Poland as a protective federation of distinct peoples. In the face of Ukrainian nationalist insurgency and the economic difficulties described above, much of this idealism waned and the Polish State took on an unjust character. Poland achieved could no longer be the spiritual ideal or the supra-national utopia which had been advanced by many of her leading poets and artists in the nineteenth century. Cultures of dissidence, i.e. romantic insurrectionary tradition, or of activism, i.e. the pragmatic Positivism of 'Organic Work', had maintained both the national profile and the prestige of writers, artists and other cultural producers. Now faced with the *realpolitik* of statehood, Poland's spirited nationalist culture threatened to fall into decline or irrelevancy. Radical artists in the 1920s tried to redirect Polish culture away from national themes. In 1921 the futurist poet, Bruno Jasiński, wrote: 'We must fling wide all our doors and windows to rid ourselves of the musty air we have been forced to breathe since childhood. Let us advance on it with giant aspirators.'⁵ But the nationalist urge to create did not abate.

Motivated by the need to 'rebuild our country',⁶ i.e. to revive the material conditions of post-war life, many Polish designers in the first years of independence maintained their nationalist enthusiasms as strongly as their oppressed predecessors. The mainstream of this nationalist design

practice was dubbed the 'Cracow School' (*Szkola Krakowska*).⁷ Curiously it has almost as much to do with Warsaw after the War as Cracow before it.

Warsaw and the Cracow School

In November 1918, wartime political power administered from Warsaw was relinquished by the defeated German military authorities. The Poles regained their right to national self-determination in that city. Piłsudski, like King Zygmunt III (Wasa) before him in 1596, established his government and the Polish capital there. Although Cracow had functioned as a national moral and cultural conscience under partition, Warsaw had marked its pre-eminent claim to political authority in the events of the 1863 uprising and 1905 conspiracy against the Tsar.⁸

Under the rule of the tsars Warsaw had been culturally disabled by programmes of Russification, pan-Slavism and vigorous anti-Western ideology. In 1918, as Edward Wytot has argued, 'political considerations of both international and national dimensions made it imperative that the country's capital city assume the lead in forming and nurturing a cultural and political milieu'.⁹ Accordingly, the State legislature and government ministries were established in Warsaw. In 1919 the Ministry of Art and Culture (*Ministerswo Sztuki i Kultury*) was founded out of the wartime Department of Cultural Affairs which had been run by the German authorities.¹⁰ In 1920 it came under the auspices of a new body, the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (*Ministerswo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego*). This body was subdivided into a number of departments, including the Department of Art which was responsible for the plastic arts, museums, memorials, literature and the theatre. Despite calls from the champions of the applied arts for support and patronage from industry and commerce, designers in the 1920s were more reliant upon state sponsorship through the Ministry than their colleagues in most other European countries.¹¹

In the post-war years the expansion of the re-established capital was regarded as an issue of national pride. After the 1831 uprising in Warsaw Tsar Nicholas I erected the Citadel (*Cytadela*), a large arsenal, manned by a garrison of soldiers, overlooking the city.¹² This fortress blocked the growth of Warsaw along a natural path. Furthermore, in an effort to check any nationalist threat from the city, they issued strict planning edicts to check its urban development.¹³ The building of the residential district of Żoliborz, in the grounds of the then redundant Citadel in the 1920s, was not simply an attempt to alleviate the tensions of urban underdevelopment, but also a gesture of national determination.¹⁴

Warsaw, expanding rapidly and the seat of government, began to attract many different cultural producers. In the relative freedom of independence

it quickly developed as a cosmopolitan centre, claimed proudly as 'the Paris of the North' by its inhabitants. With the infrastructural legacy of Russian industrialisation, the city was also home to a relatively large native bourgeoisie (relative to the Polish population which, outside the major cities, was largely a poor peasantry), a ready market for Polish cultural products. In 1922, for example, the political and conservative arts journal, *Czas* (Time), moved its editorial offices from Cracow to Warsaw. This migration from the south to the capital, a reversal of the trend around the turn of the century, became a characteristic journey in the biographies of many careerist designers and artists in the inter-war period. The illustrator and designer, Władysław Skoczylas, for example, was born in Wieliczka in Galicia in 1883 and went to study sculpture in Vienna at the age of eighteen. Between 1908 and 1918 he taught at the School of Industrial Wood Craft in Zakopane. Associated with the Cracovian Modernists, the Formists (*Formiści*), he rose to national prominence and was made a



18 Władysław Skoczylas, *Highland Robber*, 1923, wood engraving.

professor at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art in 1922, and subsequently, in 1930, its rector. By his death in 1934 he had also served as the director of the Department of Art and the president of the Institute for the Promotion of Art (*Instytut Propagandy Sztuki*).¹⁵ But his wood-engravings, graphic and tapestry designs throughout his career maintained a distinctly 'southern' character: he rarely departed from Slavic and *Górale* themes rendered in a 'folk' cross-hatched technique. Neither did he revise his early intellectual inheritance from Zakopane and Cracow: his design teaching emphasised understanding of materials and tools, and the vernacular as the true root of decorative motifs. Most significantly, he firmly held on to the notion of a national style, advocating the closest of relations between State and culture. Writing to encourage artists and designers to participate in the Universal National Exhibition (*Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa*) in Poznań in 1929, he argued:

In Poland scientists and artists must fight strongly for our material survival, far more strongly than abroad. After all, it is a well known fact that artists, whether learned or not, dedicate the lion's share of their energy worrying about our material survival. In this state of things, with regard to the fertility of our culture, art and science (...) have the power and possibilities of repair. Excellent opportunities for the vigorous promotion of this effort lies in the cultural and art exhibition.¹⁶

In his belief in 'the alliance of art and the art of government', Skoczylas revealed himself to be a prime member of the Cracow School.¹⁷

The 'Cracow School' was constituted by a number advocates of design reform living in the Austrian partition before the First World War, and throughout independent Poland in the inter-war period. Although never formally aligned, the 'School' included the members of the Rhythm (*Rytm*) group of painters and sculptors, the Cracow Workshops and many professors and teachers at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts. Each proposed notions of a contemporary national style derived from vernacular roots and usually employing geometric forms. They shared a passionate disdain for the products and culture of mechanised industry that found such favour with Modernist designers and artists across Europe. Members of this informal club included many familiar names active in the pre-war period: Józef Czajkowski, Karol Tichy and Edward Trojanowski (all co-founders of the TPSS); and Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Bonawentura Lenart and Karol Stryjeński (members of the Cracow Workshops). Each of these designers and architects was awarded a professorial post at the revived Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts in the 1920s.

Deprived of its status as an academy by the Russian partition, this school had led, until the 1920s, a precarious existence reliant on private funding.¹⁸ But in March 1922 its statute was restored by an act of parliament. In the following year Karol Tichy was made its first director and his

long-time colleague, Józef Czajkowski, designed its educational programme. In the hands of two leading Cracow School members, the revived school presented an unprecedented opportunity to develop their late Arts and Crafts philosophy and vision of a national style. Significantly, as Danuta Wróblewska has noted, the other Polish academy of fine art in Cracow seemed already stultified by tradition and distaste for the applied arts.¹⁹ Czajkowski outlined his 1923 programme in a public statement published by the Ministry of Religion and Public Education entitled *Szkola Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie. Cele i Zadania Szkoły* (The School of Fine Arts in Warsaw. Goals and Tasks). Echoing Jan Matejko, professor of painting at the Cracow Academy fifty years earlier, Czajkowski warned Polish artists and designers away from mimicking 'Western culture': 'Poland has revived from the dead politically but she has also revived internally and as such, she must find her visual expression.'²⁰ But with explicit reference to the writings of Cyprian Norwid and foreign artists, designers and writers including John Ruskin, William Morris, the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood and members of the Deutscher Werkbund, Czajkowski outlined a social philosophy to bring 'immortal art' back into daily 'circulation'. He wrote: 'In the past, work would start from individual elements, today, the primary goal is the whole. An ornament is nothing in itself, an individual piece of furniture does not exist without an interior which is (...) a home.'²¹

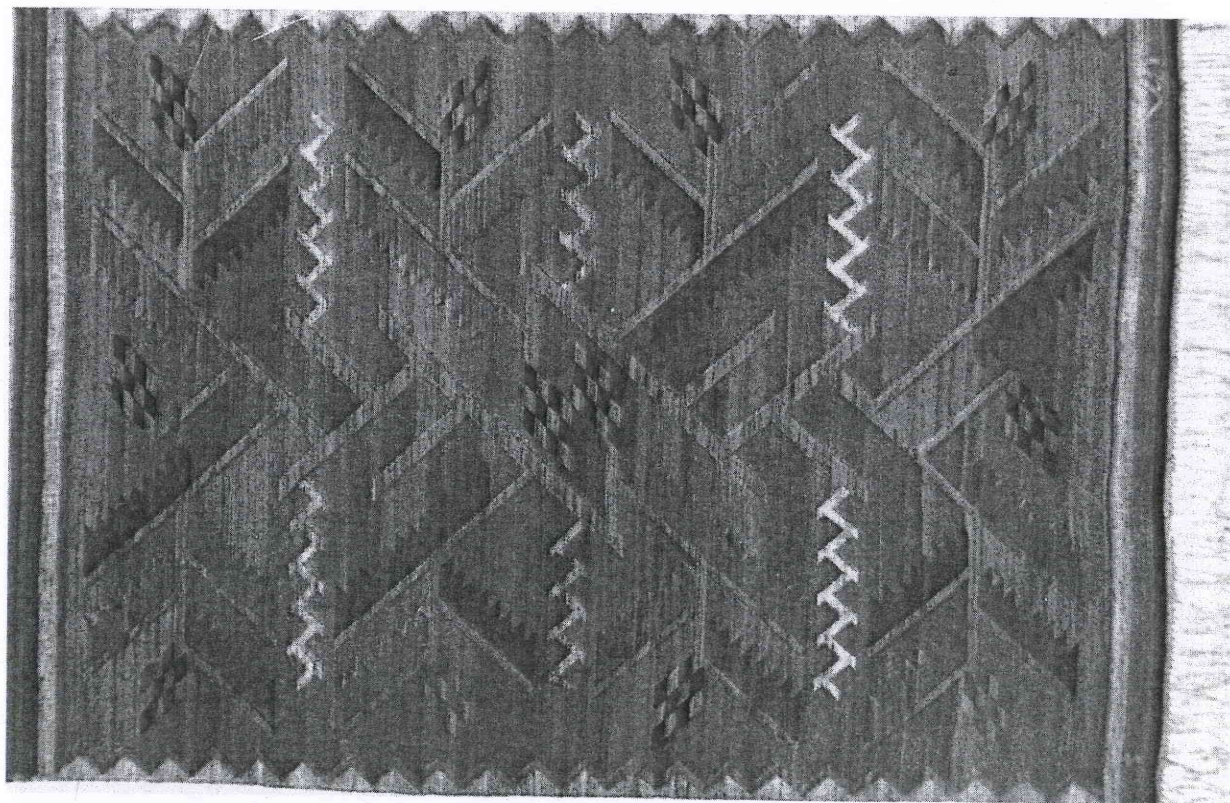
The teaching at the Academy realised a number of Tichy and Czajkowski's ambitions. The Departments of Printmaking, under the professorship of Władysław Skoczylas, and Weaving and Tapestry, under the authority of Edward Trojanowski, for example, played major roles in raising the reputations of these fields: the activities of the Cracow School, and the Warsaw Academy in particular, led to them both becoming major Polish cultural 'exports' in international exhibitions in the 1920s and 1930s.²² In the weaving studios, an insistence on the thorough knowledge of technique and an ideology of 'truth to materials' resulted in a rich variety of kilims and fabrics. The kilim proved to be an important catalyst of Arts and Crafts tradition in the inter-war period. Peasant weaving on horizontal looms furnished Cracow School ideologues with justification for their preferred decorative language. This 'technical' decoration, using stylised floral motifs or abstracted patterns along horizontal and diagonal axes, was governed by the techniques of kilim making: an example of Ruskinian concern with the propriety of making. The success and reputation of this studio was also an example, as Danuta Wróblewska has noted, of the equal weight placed on the fine and applied arts in Czajkowski's educational programme at the Academy.²³

Cracow and the Cracow School

Not all Galician designers migrated north in the inter-war period. The Cracow Workshops based in the Museum of Industry in Smoleńsk St continued to exert a major influence on the development of Polish design. The Museum itself, under yet another name (The Adrjan Baraniecki City Museum of Industry / Miejskie Muzeum Przemysłowe im. dra Adrijana Baranieckiego), played a role akin to that of a municipally sponsored regional design centre in promoting new technologies and giving advice to business about advertising.

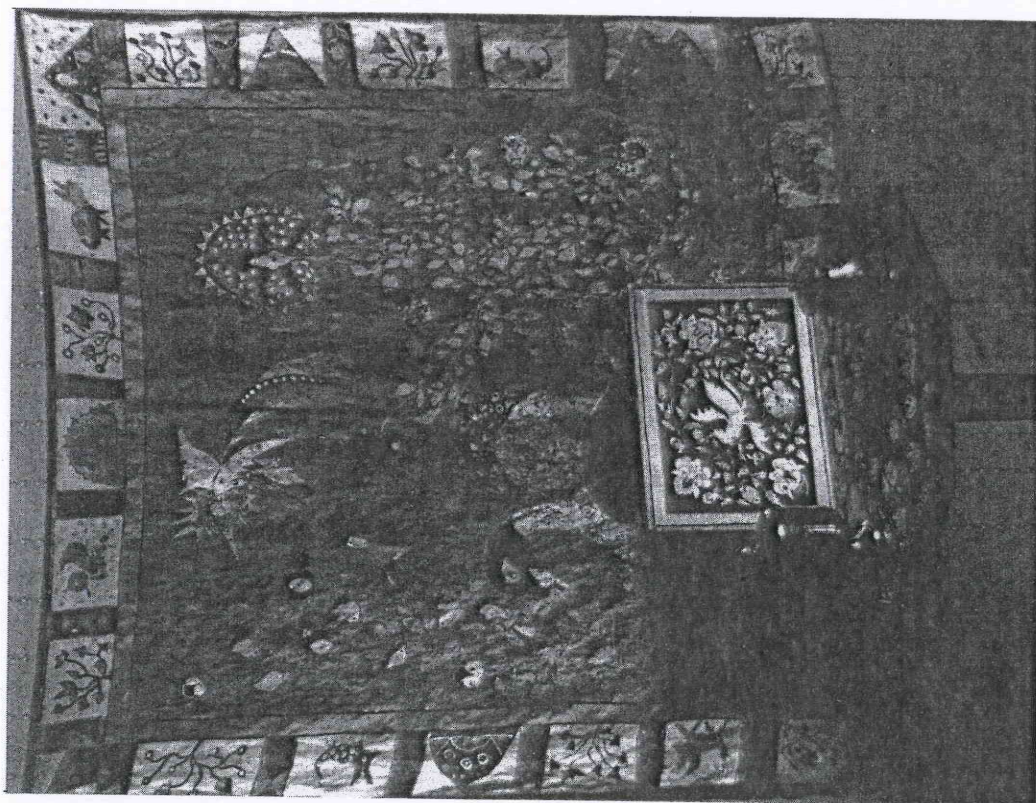
The Cracow Workshops had, in their twenty-one months of existence, before the outbreak of war, established a theoretical base: in the post-war period these notions were tested by practice. Under the partitions the ideal of workshop production had a viability related to its nationalist mien. Highly 'promoted' small-scale production provided a forum for nationalist craftsmen and designers that was difficult for the partitioning powers to co-opt or disarm. As a result of their commercially 'inefficient' scale of operation the Workshops did not attract the attention of Austro-Hungarian capital. Equally, it would seem reasonable to assume that the Workshops' output was made more appealing to wealthy patriotic Poles by its nationalist aspect. With Polish independence in 1918 these mainstays of workshop production of elevated examples of applied art declined. The Cracow Workshops faced a situation which demanded their participation in the revival of the material conditions of Polish life; a role for which they were ill-equipped.²⁴ The journal, *Rzeczy Piękne* (Beautiful Things), published by the Museum of Industry in 1918 and 1919 (and again between 1925 and 1932) became effectively the mouthpiece of the post-war Cracow Workshops.²⁵ The first edition contained an article by Adam Niezabitowski concerned with the revival of light industry (*odnowa drobnego przemysłu*).²⁶ The membership of the Cracow Workshops were intellectually attracted to the ideal of reviving handicraft and workshop production, still a significant sector of the national economy (320,000 small and under-capitalised workshops were engaged in 'handicraft' production as late as 1928²⁷). But the association, in its museum sanctuary, remained fixed with the questions of style and the education of craftsmen.

Until 1922, when the Cracow Workshops were charged with the design and making of many of the Polish exhibits at the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, its principle interests lay in batik, kilim and toy production. As a limited company from 1918, the question of funding the studios was imperative. These three modest fields of production provided income in a period of pronounced economic crisis, both for the country and the Workshops. In 1918 and 1919, for example, Zofia Stryjeńska, an illustrator and painter, designed a



19 Kilim designed by Wojciech Jastrzębowski of the Ład Group, 1928.

number of brightly painted toys which were produced in the carpentry workshop of the Museum. These highly tasteful and simple carved birds and animals, and caricatures of traditional Polish characters such as sword-carrying Sarmatian nobles of the seventeenth century, were derived from vernacular wooden figurines found throughout Poland.²⁸



20 Various objects decorated with batik and produced in Antoni Buszek's studio at the Cracow Workshops, early 1920s

The development and application of batik colouring techniques to fabric dyeing and the decoration of simple wooden items such as boxes and bowls confirmed Workshop thinking on the innate 'taste' of uncorrupted minds, an idea akin to Witkiewicz's earlier faith in the intrinsic honesty of folk design in the Zakopane region. Artist members of the Workshop, Antoni Buszek, Zygmunt Lorec, Kazimierz Młodzianowski and Norbert Okołowicz, began experimenting with ancient fabric-dyeing recipes employing natural pigments in 1913. In 1909, according to Kazimierz Witkiewicz writing in *Rzeczy Piękne*, Bonawentura Lenart, master of the bookbinding workshop in the Museum of Industry, had 'discovered' batik through Dutch and German sources in the fine arts and literature.²⁹ In 1918 Antoni Buszek revived this interest: under what has become known as the 'Buszek Method' (*Metoda Buszka*), he conducted an artistic-pedagogic experiment.³⁰ A group of young girls from the city were given inking wheels and allowed to draw at will on plain cotton. Buszek was greatly pleased with their results, believing that, without any formal training, they had produced beautiful decorative art consummate with the technique of batik. This experiment, and the subsequent foundation of a batik workshop producing fabrics, furniture coverings, wooden boxes and plates under Buszek's direction, came to be of great significance to the association. Witkiewicz wrote: 'Batik suits excellently a whole range of useful things and, with the independent grace of artistic work if truly suited to the character of batik (...), distinguishes itself from mechanically printed materials.'³¹ Batik was used as clear evidence of the veracity of their theories concerning craft production and creativity, and, no less significantly, it proved to be a profitable source of income. Their workshop goods were advertised as 'objects made according to the ideas of children and adolescents employed by the association'.³²

After the death of Włodzimierz Konieczny in the First World War the mantle of theoretician of the association fell upon Karol Homolacs. The central concern of his theories relating to the applied arts was the devising of complex schematic structures with which to assess form, ornament and style since prehistory. Despite the sometimes mystical tone of his writings, Homolacs remained true to his intellectual mentors of the nineteenth century such as Semper. Describing his own theory of ornament, he wrote:

This method takes as a principle the fact that ornament does not consist in the imitation of nature, but in the grouping of elements of form in a particular rhythm.

These elements of form are always in keeping with the material in which an ornament has been worked and the tools used, so that they reveal evenly their material origins, in other words, technique: but against this, the rhythm which determines grouping comes from an immaterial source.

The rhythm, which is conveyed in nature in vibration, whether found in the structure of atoms or the planetary system, whether found in the organisation of crystals or in the functioning of plant or animal organisms, rules equally over our psychic life and appears in music, poetry, architecture and the structure of ornament.³³

Homolacs found confirmation for his theses in his work as a teacher at a Cracow high school. His universalistic ideas about the origins of ornament provided a conceptual foundation for much of the Workshops' activities. But the shared stylistic elements in the Workshops' different projects were as much a result of their collectively held prejudices as a common theory of form. Their use of rigid angular motifs in different fields of the applied arts was, in great part, a consequence of their distaste for *Młoda Polska* and Art Nouveau's curving and sinuous decorative motifs. This hostility, in the early 1920s, was so strong that both Jerzy Warchałowski and Józef Czajkowski felt the need to restore the good name of certain *Młoda Polska* designers like Stanisław Wyspiański.³⁴

The characteristic and collectively achieved Cracow Workshop style, as it developed in the early 1920s, was exemplified in the furniture produced to Wojciech Jastrzębowski and Karol Stryjeński's designs. They both planned massive, sculptural pieces of furniture which were made in native woods, such as oak, pine and larch. Their scalloped and refined carved forms earned these projects the description 'triangular style' (*maniera na trójkątno*).³⁵ This phrase referred to Homolacs's concept of 'rhythmic organisation', i.e. dominant decorative and compositional forms. These were triangular and diamond shapes found in the overall composition of pieces of furniture, the deeply carved legs and chair arms, and the patterning of marquetry. Although produced by highly-skilled Cracow Workshops craftsmen such as Feliks Budziaszek, this style was derived, albeit at some distance, from vernacular carving techniques. This illustrates the more sophisticated level of folk inspiration in Polish applied art than was generally found in the pre-First World War period. Under the influence of figures like Homolacs and earlier 'visionary' designers such as Stanisław Wyspiański, peasant design came to be regarded as being encoded with 'true' relationships between decoration and form, and materials and maker. The Cracow Workshops' designers looked to the vernacular as inspirational rather than illustrational. In 1951 Jastrzębowski wrote in this respect; 'In folk creation (...) we saw real artistic life. To create as powerfully, depended on getting to know precisely and practically, the technique and the material with which one was to create'.³⁶

The Cracow Workshops's 'style' was extended by its members into a wide range of different fields within the applied arts. Zofia Stryjeńska, for example, employed very similar forms in her illustrations and wall decoration. In her work, even flowers were governed by a triangular geometry,



21 Zofia Stryjeńska, poster for an exhibition of her works in Warsaw, 1919

and her illustrations of costume were forced into three dimensions by deeply 'carved' shadows. Her favoured subjects were those with a strong Polish accent, such as her series of small wall paintings mounted in the Museum of Industry in 1922 on the theme of Slavic gods.

Between 1922 and 1924 the Cracow Workshops concentrated their activities on preparing exhibits for the 1925 Paris international exhibition.

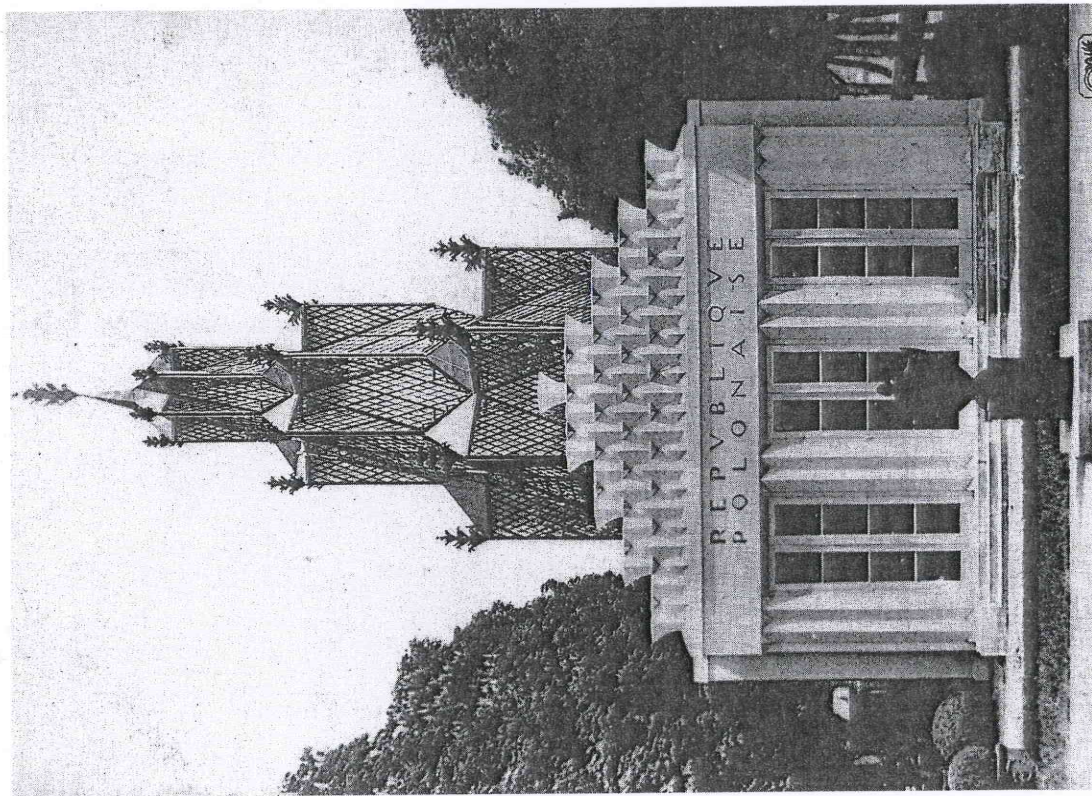
Poland at the Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes, Paris, 1925

In 1928 Jerzy Warchałowski, a key figure behind the Cracow School as a theorist and critic of the arts rather than a practising designer (his artistic ventures were limited to a few kilim designs), and a founding member of the TPSS, the Cracow Workshops and *Lad* (see below), wrote a book, published in both Polish and French, which was a partisan survey of developments in the applied arts in Poland over the preceding quarter of a century.³⁷ Its French title, *L'Art Décoratif Moderne en Pologne*, gave this beautifully printed and well illustrated book a misleading air of authority and comprehension. Warchałowski had led the commission that had orchestrated Poland's display at the Paris Exposition three years earlier. This book was less a work of design history than a celebration of the rise of 'the masters of the day'; the Cracow School, of which he was a leading member, and a personal enquiry into the successes and failures of their display in Paris. His claims to survey the recent development of Polish applied art testified to the hegemony of this school over Polish design at that time. He wrote: 'The masters of the day are the artisans from the first hour of this revival from Cracow.'³⁸

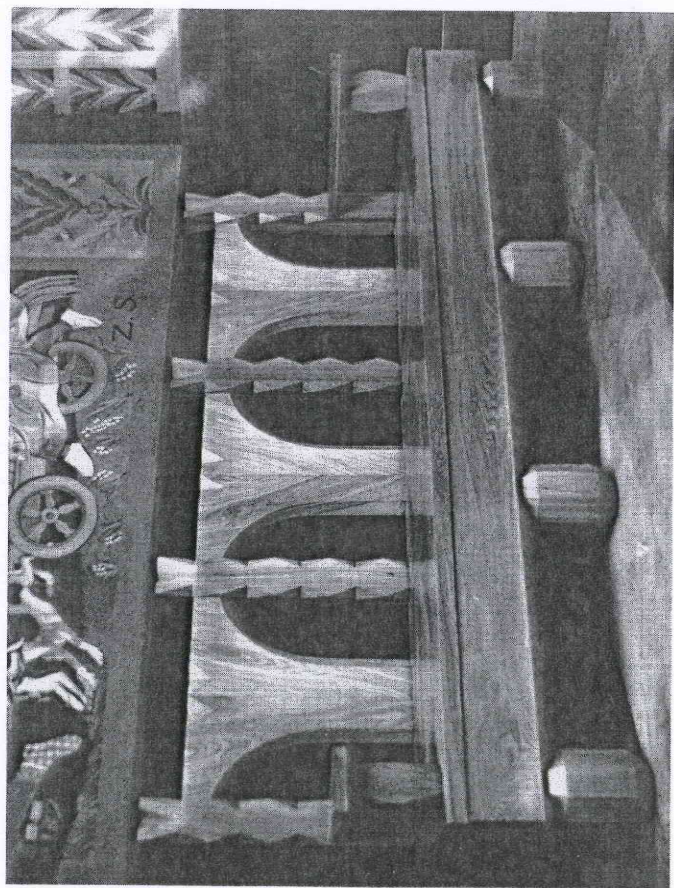
In the spring of 1920 the Polish government, then at war with Bolshevik Russia, received an invitation to exhibit at a major international exhibition planned in Paris for 1925. At the end of 1921, after the resolution of that conflict, the notion of exhibiting was revived by the Ministry of Art and Culture under the direction of Jan Heurich, an architect from Warsaw. A general committee, composed of representatives from government, business and the traditional patrons of art, the nobility, was instituted to oversee the project. Its diverse composition was a gesture intended to symbolise national unity in the early 1920s, a period of great economic and political turmoil. In practice an executive committee commissioned and prepared the exhibits for the display. This body was almost entirely appointed with men with excellent Cracow School pedigrees.³⁹ Warchałowski, as chairman, welcomed the opportunity to exhibit both as a representative of 'progressive' design in Poland and as a patriot. He announced:

My country received France's invitation with joy (...). The notion that architectural and decorative forms should be freed from all banality and from the imitation of forms from the past has been familiar to all of us for close to a quarter of a century (...). We are delighted to have the opportunity to clear up the misapprehensions which people in other countries may have concerning our national production, since, as a result of the former partitions of Poland, they were too often taken, or still are taken to be the products of Russia, Austria or Germany.⁴⁰

opportunity, within certain stylistic prescriptions, for 'all manufacturers to display their wares in Paris'.⁴¹ In Poland, where industry had been retarded by underdevelopment during the partitions, the Executive Committee sponsored predominantly designers and craftsmen working within education and other state institutions. As an example, the Cracow Workshops,



22 Polish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes designed by Józef Czajkowski, 1925



23 A bench designed by Karol Stryjeński exhibited in the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes at the Paris Exposition, 1925

whose operations, despite its status as a limited company, were some distance from pure commerce, were commissioned to design and prepare a number of exhibits in 1922. Accordingly the Polish display cannot be regarded, nor was intended as representative of the condition of even the most 'advanced' sectors of Polish industry. The exhibits were typically 'one-offs' produced either specially for the Exposition, or represented the output of various artistic or craft societies. Although commercial interest lay, in part, behind the energy and the finances invested in the Polish section, the energy driving the display was state desire to assert Poland's nationhood at this most visible of international forums. In this respect the selection of objects produced by artists, craftsmen and designers self-consciously working together to create a national style applicable to all areas of applied arts was highly compatible with the aspirations of the Polish State. The government reciprocated in the great financial support it extended to the project at a time of economic crisis.⁴²

The Polish display was dispersed over three sites at the Exposition, which itself covered a huge area both north and south of the Seine.⁴³ The national pavilion was erected at Au Cours-La-Reine next to those of

Sweden and the Netherlands. A chapel interior, a dining room and office were built to display native craftsmanship in the Galerie des Invalides. Finally, a number of rooms displaying a broad range of Polish applied arts, arranged by type, were in the Grand Palais. These three displays shared many common characteristics that are best illustrated through discussion of the national pavilion.

The Polish pavilion was designed by Józef Czajkowski with the aid of two architects, Georges Raymond and Jerzy Giebard, who were responsible for overseeing its construction on site. This long, narrow building, entirely constructed and furnished from Polish materials, was designed as a sequence of spaces through which a visitor could pass. The stylised classical entrance led visitors to a courtyard. This enclosed space was surrounded by a loggia decorated with sgraffito murals designed by Wojciech Jastrzębowski. Each depicted the emblem of major towns and cities in the new Poland in simple rhythmic lines. The centre piece of this courtyard was a sculpture of a figure in a classical pose by Henryk Kuna entitled 'Rhythm' (*Rytm*). Kuna was a member of a group of fine artists who had aligned under the name of *Rytm* and, true to their Cracow School origins, they sought to create a national style by combining the vernacular and the classical.⁴⁴ The courtyard led through a massive oak door to a small vestibule flanked by two halls displaying enormous medievalist stained-glass windows. They were designed by the renowned *Młoda Polska* painter, Józef Mehoffer, for Wawel Cathedral in Cracow and made by the firm of S. G. Żelenski; both representatives of the TPSS generation.

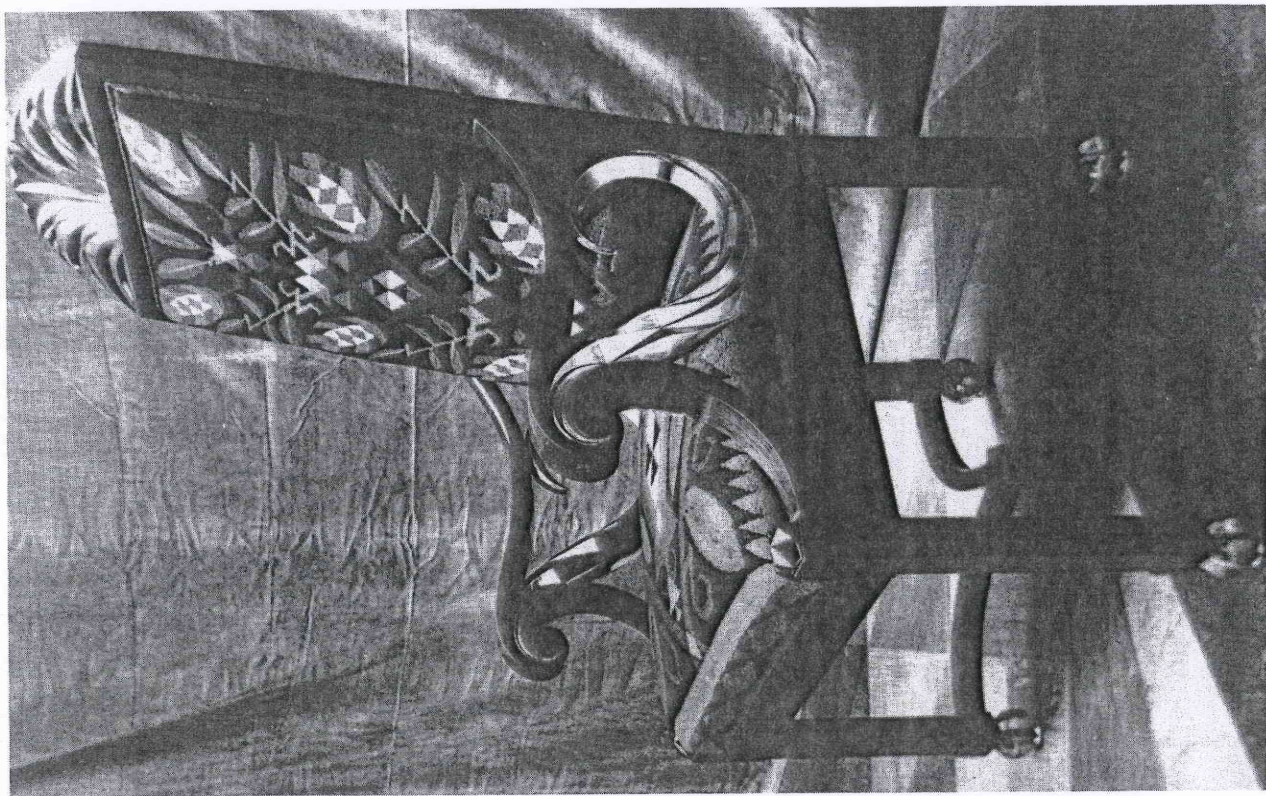
The central, and dominant space in this building was a hexagonal court capped with an atrium. This glass and lead-framed tower, constructed from hundreds of diamond-shaped panes, rose like a giant crystal. It was topped with a crowned eagle spreading its wings: the historic emblem of the independent Polish State. The diamond and the triangle were leitmotifs that reoccurred throughout the pavilion. The side wall fenestration, for example, was turned into a series of dormer windows by sharp gables that broke into the eaves. Another triangular motif below these windows created in deep relief plaster work, typically found in Renaissance doorways in central Europe, added to the 'Polishness' of these walls. Below this sparkling atrium, the main salon was the focal point of the entire pavilion. The angular crystalline forms of the exterior glass tower were modified internally into a rounded cupola supported by eight columns. Each highly carved column was made from black oak, a rare wood growing along the banks of the Vistula river. The walls of the salon were painted by Zofia Stryjeńska, with the aid of Bolesław Pisarkiewicz. These colourful frescoes depicted the seasons of the year through peasant festivals and Slavic myths in Stryjeńska's characteristic style. Karol Stryjeński, her husband and fellow Cracow Workshop member, designed solid geometric benches

which echoed some of the 'folkish' motifs in the murals above, such as sheaves of corn. This motif paid historical homage to Stanisław Wyspiański's 1904 furniture designs for the Society of Friends of Art (*Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Sztuk Pięknych*) Salon in Cracow.

This rather theatrical salon led to the final room, a more sober study designed and furnished by Józef Czajkowski and Wojciech Jastrzębowski. It also housed a number of objects designed by the Cracow School's most senior members, including tapestries by Stryjeńska, lamps by Jan Szczepkowski and Karol Frycz, and fine lace drapery by Zofia Puławska. This room and its contents, many of which were made at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts, shared many of the formal characteristics found throughout the building such as angular geometry, diamond motifs, striated surfaces, strong contrasts in light and shade, and deep carving. Even the smallest of details such as the desk's feet echoed the geometric patterns introduced so prominently on the pediment above the entrance to the pavilion. This study was destined for the use of a government official. But this was not a typical office for a bureaucrat: the quality of craftsmanship from the elegant parquet floor to the diamond-patterned ceiling was intended to represent the highest available in the country.

The Exposition Regulations had demanded displays of 'modernity' in the pavilions and their contents.⁴⁵ But Czajkowski and his colleagues presented the public in Au Cours-La-Reine with their notion of a Polish national style. This pavilion was a collective *Gesamtkunstwerk*: its authors shared a vision of contemporary Polish design. As we have seen, the sources of this style can be traced to a range of vernacular and urbane, recent and historical precedents. Warchałowski, as the style's prime sponsor as General Commissioner, was in no doubt that it was 'modern'.⁴⁶ But with historical hindsight it was not 'modern' in the sense of the fledgling Modernism exhibited in Le Corbusier's L'Esprit Nouveau pavilion at the Paris show. Czajkowski's building and its contents were an attempt to strike a balance between contemporaneity and tradition. As we have already seen, many of the key exhibitors had begun their careers within the embrace of the Polish Arts and Crafts. It is not surprising therefore that Warchałowski's *cri de coeur*, 'God save us from disappearing into Taylorism', was a key feature of the shared *Weltanschauung* of the designers and craftsmen commissioned to produce the Paris exhibits.⁴⁷

Furthermore, the Poles were not alone in their concern to express tradition in modernity. As recent studies indicate,⁴⁸ the majority of national displays appear to have had very little connection with either 'Art Deco', still today a vaguely defined applied art style which took its name from the Exposition, nor the early stirrings of the Modern Movement which could be noted in Paris in 1925. Many contemporary British observers, for example, found parallels and shared merits in both the Polish and the



24 Chair for the Office in the Polish Pavilion at the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes designed by Józef Czajkowski, 1925

Swedish displays. They regarded these displays as the finest in the entire exhibition. The *Architect's Journal* reported: 'But of the Polish pavilion and the Swedish room in the Grand Palais one can say (...) we have real living art, a handing on, and not a revival (...)'.⁴⁹ The response of the French press to the Polish display was no less interesting. It was very well received by the Exposition juries who awarded 172 prizes to Polish exhibits, the highest number given to any foreign display.⁵⁰ Maria Rogoyska has noted that a number of French critics, sharing this high opinion, regarded the faceted and carved style of Polish applied art and Czajkowski's pavilion as an interpretation and application of Cubism in the applied arts.⁵¹ Gaston Varenne in *L'Art Décoratif*, for example, described the development of the post-war Polish national style with these words: '(...) one sees it, without risk, subject to the most modern influences, notably Cubism, without ever losing its original flavour'.⁵² In fact, Warchałowski denied any influence of Cubism upon this national style.⁵³ What these observers illustrate, bar congratulating French culture for its export of Cubism, is something of the confused notions of the 'modern' in circulation at the Paris Exposition.

If the Polish display cannot be regarded as completely 'modern', it certainly was a full-blown national style. Through their international platform at the Exposition the Cracow School realised many of their aims. Claims made for the display as an expression of Polish 'national genius' and 'national values' in design may have been fallacious, but it had become the national style in a crucial aspect: it had come to be the expression of the Polish State through design.⁵⁴

National style and nation state

This was a dream. Artists have created this Poland in Paris out of nothing, for a moment, for the honour of the name, and then - after awakening - they subsided together with their efforts, back into nothingness.⁵⁵

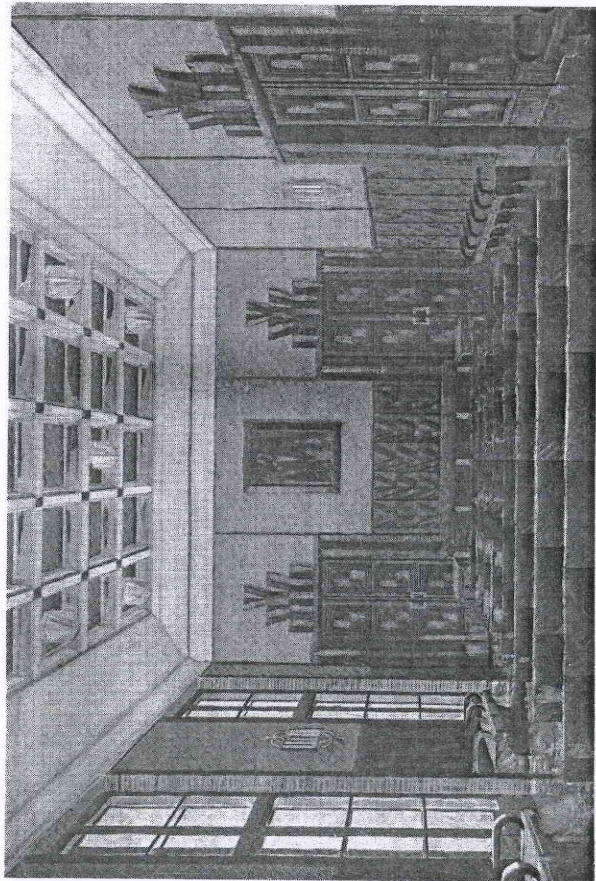
Jerzy Warchałowski

After the 'incontestable success' in Paris, the high hopes of Warchałowski and his colleagues of effecting a revolution in the taste of producers and consumers in Poland were not realised. But, as he acknowledged, the level at which the Cracow School's vision of art and design made an impact was that of the State and municipal authorities.⁵⁶ In the 1920s members of this loose alliance of designers, architects and artists were commissioned to design a number of key state buildings and interiors.

A significant early building was the Experimental High School of Commerce (*Doświadczalna Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa*) in Warsaw's Mokotów suburb. This national educational institute, established to generate economic plans with which to revive the frail national economy, was spon-

sored by the Ministry of Agriculture and Public Industry (*Ministerstwo Rolnictwa i Dóbr Państwowych*) and built by the Office of Public Works (*Dyrekcja Robót Publicznych*) between 1924 and 1926.⁵⁷ Its architect, Jan Koszczyc-Witkiewicz, had maintained a vigil for the Zakopane Style long after other practitioners had deserted it. But by the early 1920s he had developed an architectural style which combined restrained architectonic Classicism and highly stylised decorative motifs derived from vernacular sources. The Experimental High School of Commerce was composed with monumental scalloped forms described in the architectural press as 'decorative triangular shoulders (the Cracow School's 'triangular style') which liken the building to a giant sarcophagus';⁵⁸ 'naïve' decorative emblems in brickwork symbolising national industries; and gentle fluting which gave the impression of slender columns breaking the horizontal bands of window. A series of sgraffito panels designed by Wojciech Jastrzębowski representing different towns in the new Poland were fixed in the arches of a loggia that ran along the front of the building (a strong echo of the courtyard and sgraffito decoration of the Polish pavilion in Paris). This major commission was a significant expression of the Cracow School style, and, true to these Arts and Crafts roots, Koszczyc-Witkiewicz's decorative vision was applied throughout the building even down to simple fittings such as the grooved iron rings which functioned as sombre door-handles.

A highly prestigious interior design competition in Poland in the late 1920s was to plan the offices of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education (*Ministerstwo Wyznań Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego*) in Warsaw. Zdzisław Mączyński secured the commission to design the building with a monumental neoclassical project in 1927. In contrast the competition to design the interior scheme and a number of key rooms such as the Minister's offices attracted far more vernacularist entries. A Museum of Industry publication *Wzory Mebli* (Furniture Models) illustrated some of these proposals, including the winning entry designed by Cracow School member and professor at the Academy of Fine Art in Warsaw, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, which was subsequently employed in the Ministry. 'Polish' themes were displayed throughout all the rooms in this building: the use of native materials; bas-reliefs of symbols of the Polish State such as crowned eagles set above doorways; and 'triangular style' lamps. Jastrzębowski's dominant decorative form was a stepped pyramidal motif that had been widely employed throughout the Paris display and in numerous kilims produced by TPSS and Cracow Workshop designers since the first decade of the century. Jastrzębowski's designs prompted Marian Padechowicz, in an article accompanying illustrations of the competition entries in *Wzory Mebli*, to meditate on the difficulties of maintaining an international profile in different fields of design in a 'country famous for



25 Wojciech Jastrzębowski, entry in the competition to design the interiors of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education, Warsaw, 1928

being attacked by her neighbours'.⁵⁹ For Padechowicz, Jastrzębowski offered a language of design derived from vernacular and workshop production that the State should cultivate in industry and education. In this he displayed the characteristic faith which the Cracow School placed in State support for the applied arts: a view which, more than recognising the limited opportunities presented by Polish industry for designers, echoed many neo-conservative notions envisaging a central role for the State in all fields of Polish life. If the Poles' problems could be blamed on statelessness before 1918, then restoration to statehood seemed to offer utopian promise: the State became, for many, the sole national agent.

Beyond these architectural commissions other more concrete links between the Cracow School and state art policy can be highlighted. Between 1928 and 1930 Jastrzębowski, for example, was the director of the Department of Art in the Ministry of Religion and Public Education. Many other ambitious members of this alliance secured important posts in many of the official bodies responsible for the promotion of art and design in inter-war Poland. In 1932 the Institute for the Promotion of Art (*Instytut Propagandy Sztuki*) was under the presidency of Władysław Skoczylas and the directorship of Karol Stryjeński. But it should also be noted that close relations with the State or municipal authorities did not always guarantee the livelihoods of nationalist designers. In 1926 the Cracow Workshops, the corner-

stone of the Cracow School, went bankrupt. This association had suffered from financial difficulties throughout the first half of the 1920s, from which the commissions to produce exhibits for the Paris exhibition only provided a temporary respite. But as the historian of the Workshops, Irena Huml, has stressed, their closure did not mean an end to national style debates, nor the death of the Arts and Crafts in Poland.⁶⁰ Those Cracow School members working in Warsaw, by their close relationship with the State, were able to survive the Depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s (see Chapter 6).

The reasons for the close rapport between the State and these artists and designers in the 1920s are many. It should be stressed, though, that the underdeveloped condition of Polish industry presented very few opportunities for the establishment of an industrial design profession. But beyond this, Polish nationalist design was not commercially orientated. Its self-defined role, an inheritance of the partitions, was partisan and political. The Polish nation throughout the early inter-war period regarded itself to be in a state of peril. Her immediate neighbours appeared to regard her restoration to the map of Europe as a temporary phenomenon.⁶¹ Internally, the nation seemed to be in flux: fourteen different governments came to office between 1919 and 1926; the first constitutional president, Gabriel Narutowicz, was assassinated by Eligiusz Niewiadomski, a deranged right-wing painter in 1922; and ethnic minorities, most significantly the Ukrainians, were pressing for secession. Some kind of conclusion to this political turmoil only came about when Józef Piłsudski came out of retirement to lead a *coup d'état* in 1926. A pale shadow of a democracy, better described as a military dictatorship, then led the country until the German invasion in September 1939. No less importantly, the Polish economy seemed to lurch from crisis to crisis throughout the period. In this 'pervasive air of national insecurity' some artists and designers felt the need to guard over national culture.⁶² Czajkowski, for example, in his essay concerning the future of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art, warned against the lure of the West to bolster Polish commerce and culture. He announced: 'A nation cannot live without its own language and neither can it live without its own visual expression in all its possible manifestations. We never stop boasting of the Western type of our culture (...). Regrettably, we have not yet realised that our position is ridiculous and damaging to our national dignity. This causes immeasurable moral and economic harm (...).'⁶³

In 1926 the Society for the Promotion of Polish Art Abroad (*Towarzystwo Szerzenia Sztuki Polskiej Wśród Obcych*) was established.⁶⁴ The section dedicated to promoting the plastic arts drew upon the work of many of the artists and designers described in this chapter. An exhibition held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London in 1936 through the agency of this body, for example, displayed two of the central enthusiasms

of the Society; kilims and graphic art (generally forms of intaglio print-making).⁶⁵ These frequently exhibited fields of design were important cultural exports for the Polish State. Warchałowski, who regarded tapestries and kilims as synonymous with Polish creativity, argued that their production was a 'flourishing' industry which could, if exhibited throughout the world, benefit the Polish economy.⁶⁶ He was not alone in advocating the fortification and export of such 'national' products as a route to economic revival.⁶⁷

As Aleksander Wat, the Futurist poet, testified, the 1926 military *coup d'état* led by Piłsudski marked a watershed in radical culture in inter-war Poland.⁶⁸ Polish writers and artists were drawn out of the ivory tower of formalist experimentation and forced to respond to political events. After 1926, Piłsudskian politics, a compound of nationalist and populist themes, demanded unequivocal response. The Cracow School had a number of personal and incidental Piłsudskian associations.⁶⁹ But most importantly they shared his notion of the Polish State as an 'umbrella' protecting diverse peoples, and consequently, sheltering a rich composite culture. In 1928 Czajkowski echoed this paternal notion of pluralism (against a background of virulent anti-Semitism in many public areas of Polish life) when he commanded young Polish designers and craftsmen to look to the 'jewels of our culture' citing the 'treasures of village churches and synagogues'.⁷⁰

In the second half of the 1920s the notion of nationalist design came under attack. The Cracow School, with its clear associations with the State and its idealised vision of Poland, was vigorously challenged by supporters of self-consciously Modernist and internationalist design.

Notes

- 1 D. Lloyd George quoted in Davies, *God's Playground*, II, p. 393.
- 2 R. Sołtyński, *Glimpses of Polish Architecture*, Maxloves Publishing Co., London (undated: published during the Second World War), p. 24.
- 3 A. Polonsky, *Politics in an Independent Poland*, O.U.P., Oxford, 1972, p. 8.
- 4 M. C. Kaser and E. A. Radice (eds.), *The Economic History of Eastern Europe 1919-1975*, I, 1985, pp. 565-6.
- 5 B. Jasiński, 'Jednodniowa Futurystów', 1921, quoted in H. Berlew, *Funktionelle Grafik der zwanziger Jahre in Polen* (special edition of *New Graphic Design*, no. 9), Otto Walker Olten, Switzerland, 1961, p. 4.
- 6 K. Witkiewicz, 'Editorial' in *Przemysł i Rzemiosło*, no. 1, 1921, p. 1.
- 7 This designation was used readily by L. Niemcewicz in 'Décoration d'Intérieurs en Pologne' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonoise à l'Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, 1937, p. 264.
- 8 E. D. Wynot, *Warsaw Between the Two World Wars*, East European Monograph, Boulder, 1983, p. 34.
- 9 Wynot, *Warsaw Between the Two World Wars*, p. 255.
- 10 The Department of Cultural Affairs was established in 1916 to garner Polish support for the war effort and give credence to German promises of a future 'free' Poland under

German 'protection' following Berlin's victory.

- 11 J. Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif Moderne en Pologne*, Tow. Wydawnicze w Warszawie, Warsaw, 1928, p. 15.
- 12 W. Skrodzki, 'The Warsaw Citadel' in *Projekt*, 4/148, 1982, pp. 2-15.
- 13 R. Feilński, 'O planach regulacyjnych miast i osiedli' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 1, August 1925, p. 18.
- 14 Żoliborz was the site of a number of interesting architectural schemes in the 1920s. It was planned by leading proponents of the garden city ideal in Poland, including Tadeusz Tołwinski. Many of the villas built there in the late 1920s were designed by prominent Modernist architects such as Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski. See L. Heyman, *Nowy Żoliborz 1918-1939*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1976.
- 15 I. Jakimowicz, *Formiści*, Arkady, Warsaw, 1989, p. 66.
- 16 W. Skoczylas, 'Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa W R. 1929 - rola Rządu jako wystawcy' in *Rzecz Piękna*, VI, no. 12, December 1927, p. 221.
- 17 W. Skoczylas quoted in I. Jakimowicz, 'Warsaw graphic art between the two world wars' in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, p. 8.
- 18 The Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts was established by King Stanisław August, the last monarch of Poland, in 1780.
- 19 D. Wróblewska, 'From Tapestry to Woven Object' in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, p. 60.
- 20 J. Czajkowski, *Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie. Cele i Zadania Szkoły* reprinted in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, pp. 39-40.
- 21 Czajkowski, *Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych* in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, pp. 39-40.
- 22 In 1927, for example, Polish textiles and prints were exhibited at the Athenaeum Museum in Helsinki, the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the Manes Society of Artists in Prague.
- 23 D. Wróblewska, 'From Tapestry to Woven Object' in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, p. 60.
- 24 Furthermore, as B. Kołodziejowa has noted, the Viennese authorities were happy to allow the Museum freedom of action in the pre-war period, so long as they did not disturb the interests of Austrian capital. See B. Kołodziejowa, 'Miejskie Muzeum Przemysłowe im. dra Adriana Baranieckiego w Krakowie' in *Rozprawy i Sprawozdania Muzeum Narodowego w Krakowie*, XI, 1976, p. 200.
- 25 Between 1921 and 1924 two other journals were published by the Museum: *Przemysł i Rzemiosło* (1921) and *Przemysł, Rzemiosło i Sztuka* (1922-4).
- 26 A. Niezabitowski, 'Odnova drobnego przemysłu' in *Rzecz Piękna*, no. 1, 1918, p. 18.
- 27 Leslie, *The History of Poland*, p. 142.
- 28 H. Avelot, 'Les Jouets des Nations' in *Art et Décoration*, XLIX, January 1926, p. 9.
- 29 K. Witkiewicz, 'Pisanki na materiałach (batik)' in *Rzecz Piękna*, no. 4, 1919, p. 20.
- 30 Huml, *Warszaty Krakowskie*, p. 93.
- 31 Witkiewicz, 'Pisanki na materiałach (batik)' in *Rzecz Piękna*, no. 4, 1919, p. 21.
- 32 Huml, *Warszaty Krakowskie*, p. 190.
- 33 C. Homolacs, *L'Ornementation Suivant la Méthode de Charles Homolacs*, Muzeum Przem., Cracow, 1925, p. 3.
- 34 Czajkowski, *Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych* in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, p. 61. and Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 22.
- 35 Mrozek, *Miejskie Muzeum artystyczne*, p. 29.
- 36 Jastrzębowski, 'Geneza, program i wyniki' in *Polska Sztuka Ludowa*, no. 1, January-February, 1951, p. 14.
- 37 J. Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif Moderne en Pologne / Polska Sztuka Dekoracyjna*, Tow. Wydawnicze w Warszawie, Warsaw, 1928.
- 38 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 22.
- 39 Alongside General Commissioner Warchałowski, Tadeusz Stryjeński was the consultant architect, Władysław Skoczylas the vice-president, and Czesław Młodzianowski the secretary. Of the other eighteen members of the committee over half had been members of either the TPSS or Cracow Workshops.

- 40 J. Warchałowski quoted in F. Wehrlin, 'Introduction' in O. Czerner and H. Listowski (eds.), *Avant-Garde Polonoise 1918-1939*, Editions du Moniteur/Interpress, Paris/Warsaw, 1981, p. 9. To extend Warchałowski's point here, it should be noted that whilst Polish artists, designers and craftsmen had been excluded from showing their products as representatives of the Polish nation at international shows during the partitions, they had often exhibited under the auspices of the partitioned regions in which they lived. Galicia-Lodomeria, for example, was represented at the 1873 Vienna Weltausstellung as a region of the Dual Monarchy. See A. Giller, *Polska na wystawie powszechnej w Wiedniu*, 1873.
- 41 For discussion of the exposition 'brief' see P. Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, M.U.P., Manchester, 1988, p. 164.
- 42 The mid 1920s were wracked by the great instability of the Polish currency with hyperinflation and prolonged attempt to stabilise it. See Kaser and Radice, *The Economic History of Eastern Europe*, I, pp. 422-3.
- 43 For discussion of the Exposition as a whole see T. Benton, C. Benton and A. Scarfe, *Design 1920s*, The Open University Press, Milton Keynes, 1975, and Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*.
- 44 See H. Anders, *Rytm. W poszukiwaniu stylu narodowego*, Arkady, Warsaw, 1972.
- 45 London, Department of Overseas Trade, *International Exhibition of Modern Decorative Art and Industrial Art Paris 1925* (translation of official regulations and classification of exhibits). Article 4: 'Works admitted to the Exhibition must be of modern inspiration and of genuine originality, executed and presented by artists, artisans, manufacturers, model makers and publishers in keeping with the demands of modern decorative and industrial art.'
- 46 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 17.
- 47 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 16.
- 48 The catalogue to a recent exhibition 'L'art déco en Europe' at the Palais des Beaux Arts in Brussels in 1989 contains a number of essays by different authors, each surveying the state of the applied arts in their native country around 1925 (including those such as Hungary, which did not participate in the Paris Exposition). What these texts show is that many of the styles on display were generated from notions of the vernacular and the local.
- 49 S. D. Adshhead, 'The Paris Exhibition of Decorative Arts' in *The Architect's Journal*, 12 August 1925, p. 225.
- 50 150 Poles exhibited at the Exposition. Of the 172 prizes, 36 were Grand Prix and 36 were Diplômes d'Honneur. Members of the Cracow Workshops took 16 awards back to Poland.
- 51 M. Rogoyska, 'Paryskie zwycięstwo sztuki polskiej w roku 1925' in J. Staryński (ed.), *Z Zagadnienia plastyki polskiej w latach 1918-1939*, Ossolineum, Wrocław, 1963, pp. 21-51.
- 52 G. Varenne, 'L'Exposition Des Arts Décoratifs: La Section Polonoise' in *L'Art Décoratif* (special Exposition issue), 1925, p. 90.
- 53 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 31.
- 54 It should also be noted that to contemporary eyes the differences between the Polish exhibits and, say, those of the Finns or even the Austrians are difficult to decipher, but to their authors the 'national' characteristics were absolute. This shift is as much the consequence of time as geography. Even in Poland today, what was regarded as the national style of the 1920s is being recast as 'Art Deco' - a designation that elides differences between exhibiting states in Paris in 1925. See J. Zagrodzki, 'Art Deco' in *Projekt*, 3/89, no. 186, pp. 62-4.
- 55 J. Warchałowski, 'Jak sen' in *Ster*, no. 11, 1926, quoted in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 132.
- 56 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, p. 30.
- 57 Wyższa Szkoła Handlowa w Warszawie, *Sprawozdanie z budowy Gmachu*

- Doswiadczalnego Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej w Warszawie*, Warsaw, 1927, p. 7.
- 58 Author not acknowledged, 'Pawilon Zakładów Doświadczalnych Wyższej Szkoły Handlowej w Warszawie' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1927, p. 131.
- 59 M. Padechowicz, 'Prace konkursowe na urządzenie Gmachu Ministerstwa Wyznań Religijnych Oświecenia Publicznego' in *Wzory Mebli*, no. 8, 1928, p. 2.
- 60 Huml, *Warszaty Krakowskie*, p. 105.
- 61 Davies, *God's Playground*, II, p. 393.
- 62 Leslie, *The History of Poland*, p. 147.
- 63 Czajkowski, *Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych*, in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, pp. 39-40.
- 64 J. Pollakówna, 'Towarzystwa Szczerzenia Sztuki Polskiej Wśród Obcych' in Wojciechowski, *Polskie Życie Artystyczne*, 1974, pp. 550-6.
- 65 M. Treter, *Polish Art: Graphic Art and Textiles* (exhibition cat.), Victoria and Albert Museum, London, 1936.
- 66 Warchałowski, *L'Art Décoratif*, pp. 32-4.
- 67 K. Skórewicz, 'Sztuka Współczesna' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1928, p. 237.
- 68 A. Wat, *My Century*, W.W. Norton, New York, 1990, p. 1.
- 69 (i) Piłsudski used the building which housed the Museum of Industry in Smoleńsk St in Cracow, to present a series of talks in 1912. These barely disguised lectures on military strategy were intended to rally fighters for the Polish cause. See R. Zieliński, *Krakowskim szlakiem walk o niepodległość w latach 1768-1918*, Wydawnictwo PTTK 'Kraj', Warsaw, 1988, p. 63.
- (ii) A number of members of the Cracow School had fought with Piłsudski in the Polish Legions in the First World War, including Wojciech Jastrzębowski.
- (iii) The architect and member of the Cracow Workshops, Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, was ordered to relinquish his military post during the First World War by an officer in Piłsudski's command, Ignacy Mościcki, to look after the Polish seat of kings, Wawel Castle, in Cracow. In the 1930s Szyszko-Bohusz was employed to design the presidential palace for Mościcki, who, as a close colleague of Marshal Piłsudski, had risen to this post.
- 70 Czajkowski, *Szkoła Sztuk Pięknych*, in *Projekt*, 2/80, no. 135, p. 40.

Questioning parochialism

But the idle and the sterile plagiarise the folk culture of the past, fill the air with the deafening cry of crickets, and sing out of tune with the poetry of others.

Le Corbusier

Blok

The popular press reported the national display at the Paris Exposition and the prizes secured there with a sense of great satisfaction as 'the success of Polish art'.¹ One constituency in Poland regarded this national 'triumph' with rather less felicity. The young Constructivist, Mieczysław Szczuka, wrote of the exhibitors:

They joined in an exhibition of decorative art in Paris which had been established on false foundations, a fact displayed even in its title. Utilitarian creation, not decorative art ought to have been the assignment of the exhibition. The organisers of the Polish section, on the other hand, chose to understand the aims of this exhibition in their own way. The official slogan, CONTEMPORARY ART WITHOUT FOLKLORE, was disregarded and the Polish section was actually organised (bar a few exceptions) under this slogan of 'folkishness'. It was assembled under the following conditions: 1) A LACK OF CLOSE CONTACT WITH PAN-EUROPEAN MOVEMENTS IN ART; 2) NO AWARENESS OF THE NEEDS OF POLISH ARTISTS AND THE ADVANCE OF CONTEMPORARY LIFE; 3) AS A 'CONSTRUCTION' OF A NATIONAL ART.²

This attack on the Cracow School was not without foundation. As a Marxist, Szczuka's expressed concern with 'contemporary life' was not an idle Futurist polemic, but a statement of his belief in the need to radically improve social conditions, in what was widely accepted as a new era, by design. Despite the Morrisian aspect of the Cracow School project, its aspirations to universalise beauty threatened to remain no more than philosophical prescriptions. Workshop models of production seemed to Szczuka to be anachronistic in the age of 'Modern City. Mass. Machine' (*Miasto. Masa. Maszyna*).³ Furthermore, folk art not only seemed a historical residue of an earlier age, but vernacular models were incompatible with the aspirations of the ascending class, the proletariat. He wrote in 1923:

THE WORKING CLASS
SELLING ITS

TIME AND LABOUR HAS GOT NO
OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE ITS OWN ART

WHILE THE PEASANT
IN PART FOR HIMSELF
HAS CREATED ART
SO CALLED FOLK ART⁴

The small but radical Marxist Modernist culture in independent Poland developed out of a number of waning Futurist and Formist groups between 1922 and 1924 under the influence of figures like Bruno Jasiński, a poet whose work shifted from the noisy aggression of poems like *Rzygające posągi* (The Vomiting Statues, 1920) which attacked bourgeois dreams of luxurious life to the explicit social protest of *Pieśń o głodzie* (Song of Hunger, 1922).⁵ Radical poets like Jasiński and Aleksander Wat, as well as Szczuka and his circle, were drawn into the sway of the small Polish Communist Worker's Party (*Komunistyczna Partia Robotnicza Polska*) in the pursuit of internationalism, radical new aesthetic languages which they saw emanating from the Soviet Union and a desire to see the end of social injustice. The Communist Party led a quasi-underground existence (it chose to boycott the first democratic elections) in an anti-Communist Poland of the early 1920s.⁶ From 1924 Szczuka was particularly active as the designer of *Nowa Kultura* (New Culture), the Party's journal, edited by Jan Hempel. Although it should be noted that the Party was not a steady supporter of Modernist culture: when Hempel published Wat and Władysław Broniewski's Futurist poetry in the third edition of *Nowa Kultura*, the party reacted with an attack on Modernism;⁷ similarly, Szczuka fell into a number of conflicts with Party ideologues on aesthetic matters.

Szczuka was a leading figure in the first generation of Modernist designers active in Poland in the inter-war period.⁸ He and his fellow 'constructors' including Karol Kryński, Witold Kajruksztis, Maria Puciatycka, Henryk Stażewski, Władysław Strzemiński and Teresa Żarnowerówna assembled under the name of their journal, *Blok*, at the beginning of 1924. Based in Warsaw, these self-designated Constructivists were intellectually close to the theories of the 'artist-engineer', Vladimir Tatlin, in the Soviet Union. The group was actually established in effect, if not name, after the Exhibition of New Art (*Wystawa Nowej Sztuki*) in Wilno (today Vilnius, Lithuania) in May 1923 which displayed a perplexing range of Dadaist art and Purist paintings. The catalogue, a collection of statements of intent by the individual exhibitors, was more single-minded. Teresa Żarnowerówna (whose sculptures from this exhibition have not survived, though other works from the period were based on a strong formal contrast between a pointed geometry and organic shapes) echoed a common theme in champi-

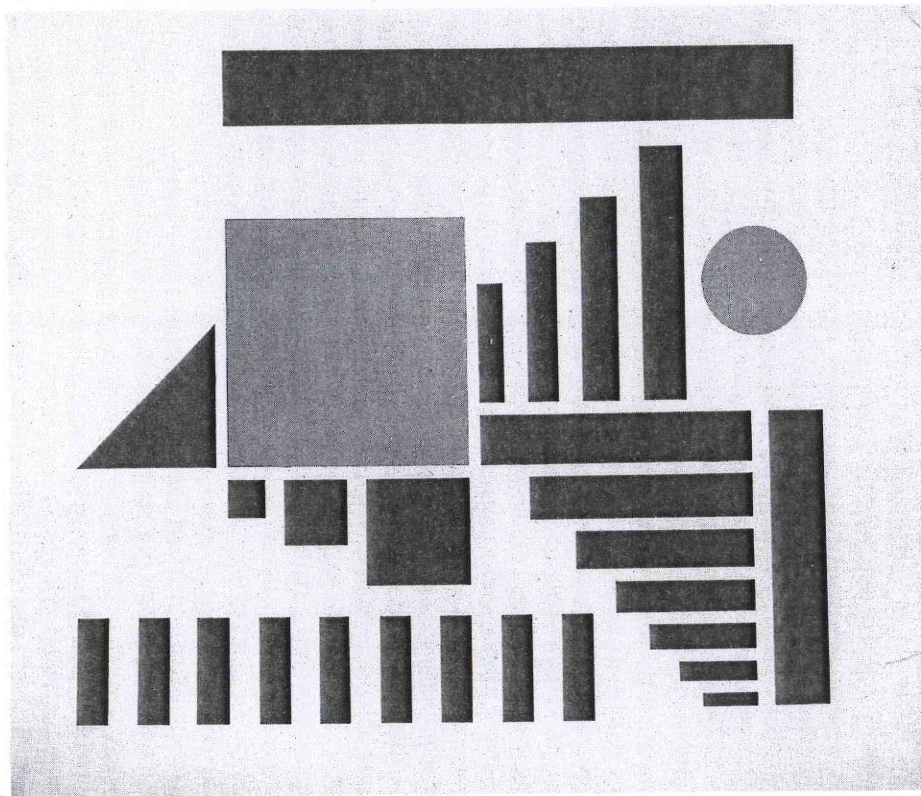
oning the machine over the easel, and technology over nature: 'Changing the field of vision, technology has changed the means of expression by introducing new material and it has broadened the scope of unexpected possibilities.'⁹ The revolutionary tone of such announcements can be traced back to the intellectual roots of the seven artists participating in Wilno. Władysław Strzemiński, for example, had been active in the Soviet avant-garde between 1917 and 1922 as a student of the Vkhutemas and a collaborator with Kasimir Malevich in Moscow and Vitebsk.¹⁰ Others had stronger German links: Henryk Berlewi had been a member of the leftist Novembergruppe during his stay in Berlin between 1921 and 1923.¹¹

The Exhibition of New Art in Wilno was the first action of the, as yet, unaligned group. Blok proper was born in March 1924 when the first issue of its journal was published, and was initiated at a collective exhibition in the Warsaw Laurin-Clement car showroom two months later. Henryk Berlewi's graphic designs were the most radical of the diverting range of works on show there. The exhibition press release, as Andrzej Turowski has noted, 'laconically' described the contributors as 'Cubists, Constructivists and Suprematists'.¹² Berlewi's works illustrated his theory of 'Mechano-faktura' formulated in June 1923 in Berlin, and published as a pamphlet in Warsaw in 1924 and by *Der Sturm* later that year. Berlewi argued that contemporary fine art was dependent on illusory traps and 'skilful virtuosity' which could only be overcome by a practice which recognised the 'predominant significance' of 'the material side of painting' through the systematic employment of mechanical techniques.¹³ Clearly throwing down a gauntlet to the principles of Arts and Crafts design in Poland, he attacked both the anachronism of craftsmanship and the belief in the virtue of 'natural' materials in his celebration of the transformative potential of modern technology. In December of the same year, Berlewi sought to realise his theory by setting up a firm, *Reklama-Mechano* (Mechano-Advertising), with two Futurist poets, Stanisław Brucz and Aleksander Wat, to produce logos and slogans for trade promotions (echoing Vladimir Mayakovsky and Alexander Rodchenko's 'Reklam-Constructor' partnership of 1923 in Moscow.¹⁴). In 1925, for example, *Reklama-Mechano* produced a brochure for the Plutos confectionery company. This design, with its sans-serif letter forms and diagonal composition, was a striking and unfussy example of Modernist typographic design in Poland in the 1920s. Although it was a rare example of the application of Berlewi's ideas, it was a significant moment of engagement.

Blok, or at least its more vociferous members, were a forceful intellectual motor propelling the development of Constructivism in Poland in the mid 1920s. Through the agency of their journal, published in eleven issues between 1924 and 1926, they shifted away from their original painterly concerns to 'take up the problem of construction' and the 'problems of

society'.¹⁵ Its leading theorists, Szczuka and Żarnowerówna, sought: 'To introduce art into life as a factor contributing to general development, and in its turn dependent upon the changes occurring in other fields of creative activity, mainly on technology. The problems of art and social problems are indivisible.'¹⁶ They aimed to shift art away from aesthetics to utilitarian concerns, to design.

In the context of Polish design debates in the 1920s, Blok were clearly opposed to the supporters of 'applied art'; a phrase used with scorn by Szczuka and his colleagues. Furthermore, this opposition had a national, political aspect for, as socialist artists and designers, they raised a red flag against the authority of such 'state' designers as Wojciech Jastrzębowski.



26 Henryk Berlewi, *Mechano-faktura*, 1924

Despite the vitality of their thought, Blok's ideology of construction remained in the realm of theory. Projects by members of the group, even if usually unrealisable as designs, were regarded as visual polemics and animating manifestos. Szczuka, as a Constructivist, placed architecture as the creative centre in the new world to come. In the mid 1920s he produced a number of architectural plans and axonometric drawings for severe Modernist buildings based on the principle advocated by De Stijl artists and designers that vertical and horizontal lines should dictate the composition of formal elements. Bar the few designs that he produced with Żarnowerówna and Szymon Syrkus, a professional architect and member of Blok from 1924, questions concerning the erection of most of his schemes remained unanswered, as Szczuka provided no constructional data: these were buildings as manifestos.

In 1926 Szczuka, alongside Professors Jankowski and Świerczyński of the Warsaw Polytechnic, was one of the organisers of the First International Exhibition of Modern Architecture (*I Międzynarodowa Wystawa Architektury Nowoczesnej*)¹⁷ which displayed architectural plans by a number of European architects from Poland, Belgium, Czechoslovakia, France, Holland and the 'artist-engineers' of the Soviet Union, as well as a number of photographs of industrial constructions. Edgar Norwerth, a lecturer in architecture in Petrograd in the early years after the October Revolution, who had recently returned from the Soviet Union, and hence, was fully aware of the 'machine age' theses in circulation there, reviewed the exhibition. Acknowledging that the exhibits were not a revelation to 'experts' in Poland, he stressed that this exhibition's difficult task of finding public appreciation was twofold: 'it has to convince that (modern architecture) is neither strange nor Bolshevik'.¹⁸ Only five years had passed since Poland had signed the Treaty of Riga with Lenin's Russia, and anti-Communist sentiment was still marked in society. But for Norwerth the crucial issue raised by the exhibition was the 'romanticisation of the factory' (*romantyzm fabryki*), in terms of both a machine aesthetic and notions of the organisation of society and life. Although, welcoming an architecture 'well formed with social life, with the conditions of the age',¹⁹ Norwerth's misgivings over Modern Movement architecture was an early expression of concerns that were grow through the inter-war period.

Blok split in 1926 in an acrimonious dispute between supporters of a severe 'Productivist' ideology aiming at the sublimation of art into design led by Szczuka, and the supporters of Władysław Strzemiński, who, although still seeking a greater social role for art, accused Szczuka of 'Tatlinism'. Strzemiński regarded the subjugation of art to production as a check on its fertile development, believing that the path for modern art was the examination and invention of a new form, 'Post Suprematism'. This conflict is not only interesting because it illustrates the awareness in Poland

of Soviet debates concerning the course and role of abstraction in art, but also for the manner in which it echoed (and prefigured) similar conflicts within the Modern Movement in the mid 1920s as a defined design practice within Modernism became clear; notably Karel Teige's attack on Le Corbusier in the late-1920s in the Czechoslovakian journal, *Stavba*.²⁰ But it should also be stressed that there was more than an element of intellectual egotism in the disputes between Szczuka and Strzemiński, whose theories were not as divergent as their polemics.

Blok marked a key theoretical stage in the development of Modernism in Poland. Through the dispersal of its membership after the schism in 1926, Blok triggered a ripple effect in Polish design. Szczuka maintained his role as the pre-eminent Marxist artist/designer in Poland in the publication of four issues of *Dźwignia* (The Lever) from March 1927 which included contributions from the leading figures from the Polish literary left, including Jan Hempel and Witold Wandurski (Szczuka died in August of that year in a mountaineering accident and his journal only survived four more issues). In the fourth and final issue under his editorship, he published his essay 'Art and Reality' (*Sztuka a rzeczywistość*) in which he extended his emphatic attack on both bourgeois taste for applied decoration (including 'pseudo-folk art') which was, according to Szczuka, a consequence of Capitalism, and on the 'disinterested work on formal problems' by figures like Strzemiński.²¹ He argued in this article, his most fully developed Marxist position, that it was time to combine utilitarian construction with utilitarian aesthetics: to rectify the divorce of 'pure art' from a changing society and new technologies, and to work for 'a new audience', the proletariat, which 'demands useful things'.²²

In the year of Blok's collapse, 1926, the majority of its membership joined an architect-led coalition of Modernists under the name of Praesens. From their sanctuary of theory, Blok had engaged in a critique of nationalist design. The members of Praesens shared this disdain also, but concentrated their activities on practice. Although they issued fewer explicit challenges to the Cracow School, the character of their practice was pronouncedly internationalist and anti-traditionalist.

Praesens

The central role of architecture in revolutionising life was a vigorously held, if largely theoretical, premise for the membership of Blok, whereas for Praesens architecture was the prime focus of their attention and practice. The group was founded by Szymon Syrkus (a graduate of both architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic and in painting and sculpture at the Cracow Academy of Fine Art and active in the Formist group (*Formiści*) of Expressionist artists in that city) and a small number of architects and

painters in June 1926.²³ The group's programme was set out in the first edition of their journal, also named *Praesens*, in an article by Syrkus entitled 'Estimates of Architecture' (*Preliminarz architektury*). This 1926 text, indicating Syrkus's intellectual development between 1922 and 1924 when he came under the sway of the Bauhaus during a stay in Weimar and members of the De Stijl group during his visits to Piet Mondrian's studio in Paris, demanded closer relations between architecture and the modern forms and technologies of industry. This, Syrkus believed, would provide solutions to questions concerning the development of architectural types responsive to future social needs: 'Thanks to the standardisation and centralisation of large industry we have: furniture-machine, apartment-machine, town-machine.'²⁴ Like Szczuka, Praesens, through their commitment to designing housing above all other building types, expressed a pronounced social ethic: 'Form as an objective is "art" or artism, while today these words are almost meaningless for us. What we are pursuing is not form, but architecture, the new compositional laws for building habitation apparatuses and collective life apparatuses.'²⁵ Within Praesens's ideology, artists were regarded as specialist collaborators working with architects, for example, in planning colour schemes for buildings. The painters and architects within the association shared a common social and architectural goal. Henryk Stazewski, a painter member of Praesens, asserted a shared dogma in stating: 'Contemporary problems of form, which shape the style of today, are solved above all through architecture. Painting and sculpture not allied to architecture are unimaginable today and have no right to exist.'²⁶ Praesens wished to unite architecture and art into an artistic whole, the planned urban environment.

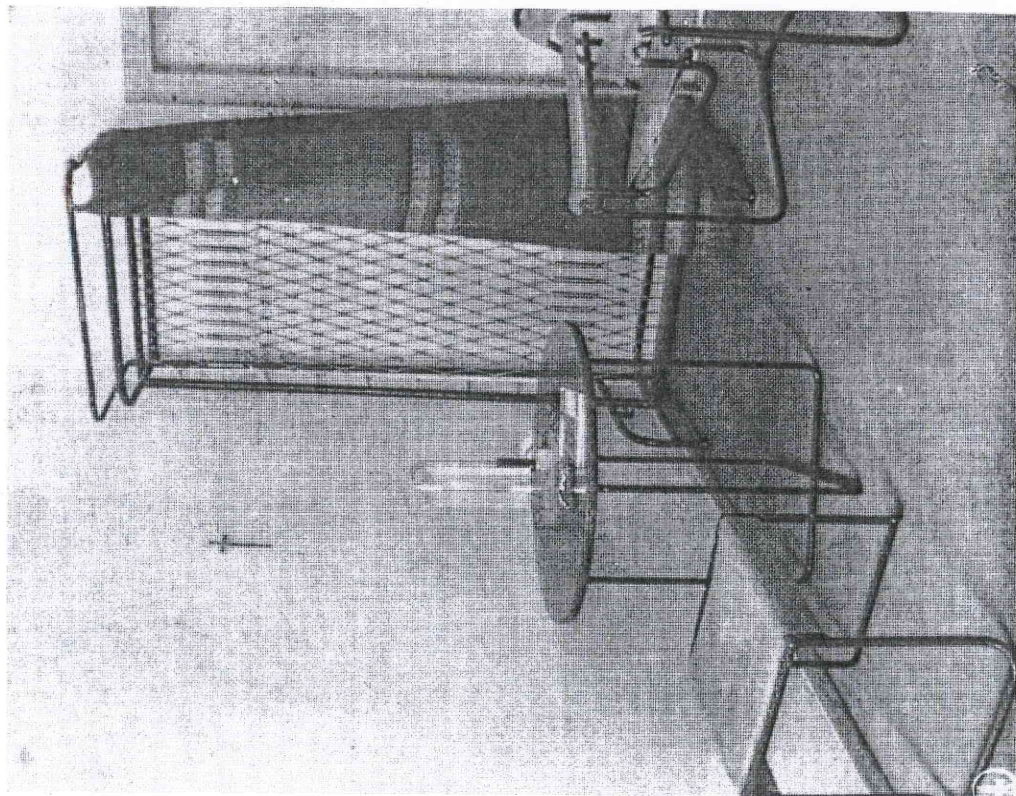
Between 1926, the date of their first exhibition in Warsaw's Zachęta gallery, and 1930, when they were a major contributor to the Minimum Flat (*Mieszkanie Najmniejsze*) exhibition in Warsaw, Praesens's membership exerted a compelling 'functionalist' (*funkcjonalne*) influence on debates concerning architecture and design.²⁷ They held interrelated aspirations of revolutionising building forms through novel construction techniques, such as the prefabrication of standard elements, and social amelioration by improving the urban environment and housing conditions.²⁸ From the late 1920s their programmes and statements, published in such journals as *Dom. Osiedle. Mieszkanie*. (House. Community. Flat) expressed their growing concern with the planning of the entire urban environment. The apotheosis of this kind of Modernist wholism came in Praesens' presentation at the planning meeting of the Comité International pour la Réalisation des Problèmes d'Architecture Contemporaine in London in May 1934. This scheme, entitled 'Functional Warsaw' (*Warszawa Funkcjonalna*), was produced by Syrkus and Jan Chmielewski of the Urbanistics (*Urbanistykai*) group in 1931.²⁹ This highly theorised research mapped the

optimum future development of the Polish metropolis within a European context. In taking into account geographical data, modern communication links and historical trade roots, as well as statistical forecasts for demographic growth and industrial development, this acknowledgedly 'utopian' scheme was a clear example of an internationalist ideology, a city planning scheme which transcended national boundaries.

Praesens, more than any other group of Polish designers in the inter-war period, escaped what they regarded to be the parochial ghetto of Polish national design. In the context of European alliances in design and architecture, not to be internationalist was not to be modern. Syrkus argued in the first edition of *Praesens* in 1926: 'It was not Łowicz peasant paper ornaments that made the name of Poland famous, but Copernicus, who also made Polish science international. A place in the twentieth century world will be assured for Poland by the competition of the Polish intellect and Polish discoveries, not folklore or ethnographic values.'³⁰ Syrkus and his colleagues self-consciously sought alliances with the pan-European Modern Movement in design. This can be seen most clearly in the two editions of their journal published in June 1926 and May 1930. Published in both French and Polish, the first issue, on its title-page, informed its readership of a 'network' of kindred magazines across the continent including *G, De Stijl, MA*, and *Stavba* amongst others. The contents of the first edition included an article by J. J. P. Oud, the Dutch architect and ex De Stijl member, on the social relevance of architecture, and two shorter articles by Theo van Doesburg and Kasimir Malevich. Van Doesburg, in fact, proved to be a significant catalyst for Modernism in Poland, as he was for much of Central and Eastern Europe. A number of Polish Modernists had personal contact with him and those that did not were able to read a number of texts by him in not only *Praesens* and its predecessor, *Blok*, but also in the professional architectural journal, *Architektura i Budownictwo*.³¹ In return, van Doesburg paid complement to his Polish colleagues by reviewing their activities favourably in *Het Bouwbedrijf* in 1930 and 1931.³² Praesens's expressed internationalism was not only seen in their professional contacts and literary activities: its members collectively and individually contributed to a number of exhibitions outside Poland which promoted Modernist themes, such as the International Theatre Exhibition in 1926 and the Machine Age Exhibition of the following year, both held in New York.

Polish design was fully initiated into European Modernism in June 1928 when the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), then sitting at La Sarraz, invited the group to become Polish representatives at its congresses. Praesens members, Szymon Syrkus and Józef Szanajca, were elected to the posts of Polish Delegate and Deputy on the strength of their entry for the competition to design the Palace of Nations in Geneva in 1927. Intellectually, Praesens displayed the same degree of internationalism in its

enthusiasm for the notion of the 'Minimum Flat' (*Mieszkanie Najmniejsze*): a concept then in vogue amongst the proponents of the Modern Movement. The search for the definition of the *Existenzminimum*, the minimum spatial and service requirements in dwellings, had become an established Modernist theme by the turn of the decade. It underpinned the thought and practice of many of the leading Modernist architects of the day, including the city architect of Frankfurt am Main, Ernst May.³³ Al-



27 Metal furniture designed by Szymon Syrkus and made by the firm of Konrad Jarnuszkiewicz which was exhibited at the Minimum Flat exhibition, Warsaw, 1930

though designers across Europe had been investigating the reduction of all activities of the resident into 'functional elements', from the mid-1920s, the contentious idea of the *Existenzminimum* was given a fuller airing at the 1929 CIAM which met in Frankfurt to debate the theme of 'Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum'.³⁴

The Polish delegates at the Frankfurt congress included some of the initiators of an exhibition entitled The Minimum Flat (*Mieszkanie Najmniejsze*) in Warsaw in March 1930 displaying over 200 photographs and illustrations which had been shown in exhibition at the Frankfurt congress the previous year.³⁵ Through the agency of the Warsaw Housing Co-operative (*Warszawska Spółdzielnia Mieszkaniowa*), twenty flats in the Żoliborz district were given over to architects to produce interior schemes and furniture, as an illustration of potential inexpensive furnishings. Designs by Praesens members drew encouraging comment, with Stanisław Marzyński asserting, in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, that the best interior was designed by Stanisław and Barbara Brukalski for the simplicity and efficiency of its furnishing and layout.³⁶ These modest prototypes for cupboards and armchairs made from laminated plywood were designed to furnish a flat in a building which this architectural partnership had built for the Co-operative some years earlier. Szymon Syrkus displayed tubular iron, multi-functional furniture such as a bed designed to stand upright when not in use, and an armchair with a fabric back and seat that drew heavily on Marcel Breuer's 'Wassily' chair of 1925. 'Metal furniture', commented Marzyński favourably, '(...) is a sign of the fact that we have not waited to be overcome by foreigners in this field. This furniture is very well finished, rather pretty and certainly practical. It would be good if we could use them in our small flats instead of dilapidated wooden furniture.'³⁷ Unfortunately, this patriotic commentator overestimated the prowess and modernity of Polish industry, for, unlike the 'Wassily' chair which was produced in tubular steel by Standard-Möbel in Berlin in 1926, none of the items of furniture exhibited by Syrkus and the firm of Konrad Jarnuszkiewicz i S-ka as prototypes went into commercial production.

Other Modernisms

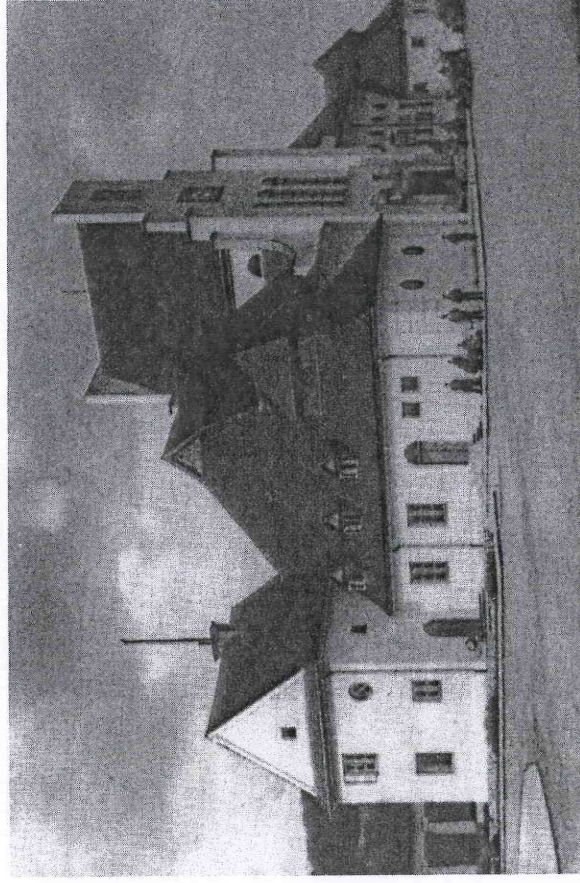
The initiation of Modernist design in Poland was not solely the result of actions by radical agitators, such as Praesens and Blok with their belligerent manifestos and new theories. The Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic, under the professorship of Rudolf Świerczyński, proved to be a less vocal, but equally influential centre of architectural Modernism. In 1921, for example, Świerczyński and his students visited Le Corbusier and saw a number of early Modernist buildings in Paris, and on their return, organised an exhibition illustrating this 'new' architecture at

the Warsaw Polytechnic. Many of the leading Modernist architects of the inter-war period studied under Świerczyński during the early 1920s, including Barbara and Stanisław Brukalski, Helena Niemirowska and her future husband, Szymon Syrkus, Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca. Warsaw Polytechnic Faculty of Architecture's international reputation was such that it also attracted architectural students from abroad including Berthold Lubetkin from the Soviet Union in 1923, who acknowledged his studies there as the most important teaching that he received during his scattered education.³⁸ Less prominently, the Department of Drawing under Professor Bartłomiejczyk from 1917, became a key training ground for Modernist graphic designers such as Tadeusz Gronowski and Aleksander Rak.³⁹

Outside architectural education, housing co-operatives effected 'progressive' urban schemes and housing types in new suburbs in the capital such as Żoliborz. And at the level of state-sponsored urban and industrial development, the regions of Upper Silesia and the port of Gdynia, both areas of political friction between Poland and Germany between the world wars, saw fully-fledged Modernist urban development. Furthermore, many Modernist notions rose to the position of virtual professional truisms within architectural practice in the mid-1930s. The Association of Polish Architects (*Stowarzyszenie Architektów Polskich/ SAP*), founded in the mid-1920s, although not subscribing to a single architectural ideology, was regarded as increasingly 'progressive'. Theo van Doesburg wrote: 'S.A.P. tries to make propaganda for the rather divergent tendencies in modern architecture in a strictly nationalist manner by means of annual architectural exhibitions and publications.'⁴⁰ The rise of Modernism can also be traced through the leading architectural journal of the period, *Architektura i Budownictwo*, which narrowed in content from editorial pluralism in terms of historical styles and urban theory in the mid-1920s to a clear advocacy of modern constructional techniques and Modernist architectural languages by the mid-1930s. This is not to suggest that a Modernist design culture grew independently of the actions of Blok and Praesens: as has already been noted, Świerczyński and Mieczysław Szczuka (amongst others) acted together in the spring of 1926 in organising the First International Exhibition of Modern Architecture in Warsaw's Zachęta gallery. But in the 1920s Modernism was propelled by different voices expressing different opinions in different tones. The strident internationalism of Praesens and Blok was not characteristic of all Modernist designers, architects and planners. Although lacking the literary evidence of manifestos and published polemics, it is interesting to speculate on the actions of other less vocal practitioners *vis-à-vis* questions of national design.

The development of the Baltic coast town of Gdynia is an interesting case in point. The Treaty of Versailles, in seeking to guarantee both Polish access to the sea and German rights over Eastern Prussia, created a terri-

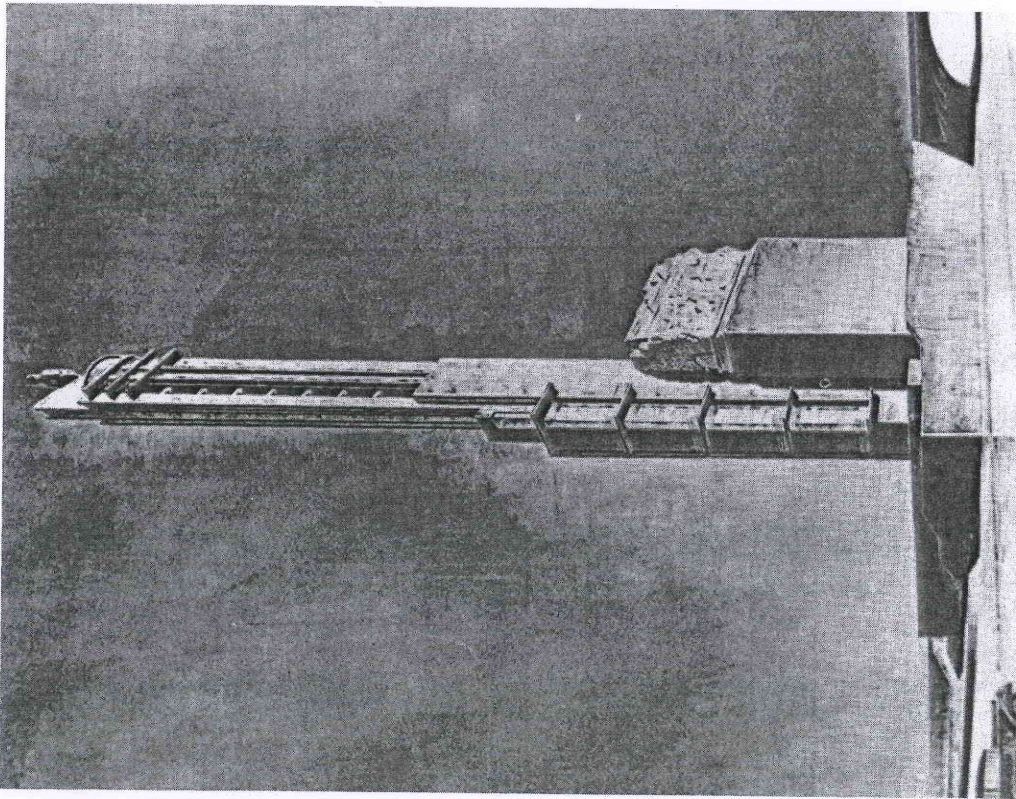
torial 'corridor' ('the Polish Corridor') to the Baltic and designated Danzig a 'free city'. Both states were given equal access to this port. In 1920 this agreement faltered when German dockers, seeking to obstruct the Polish war effort, refused to handle Polish trade. Consequently, in 1922 the Polish government passed legislation to transform the small fishing village of Gdynia, with 2,500 inhabitants, twenty kilometres to the north of Danzig, into a national port. Under the influence of Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, Minister of Finance and Commerce, Polish governments, with French backing from 1926, invested heavily in this project and were rewarded with com-



28 Train station at Gdynia designed by Romuald Miller, mid-1920s

mercial success.⁴¹ By 1932 the trade passing through this modern Polish port outstripped that through ancient Danzig. The Polish government also invested great energy into promoting the 'Polish coast' internationally (even sponsoring the publication of a series of books in English and French, under the imprint of The Baltic Pocket Library / *Le Petite Bibliothèque Baltique*, to legitimate Polish actions on the Baltic coast with archaeological studies and histories of 'Polish' life in the region). At home Gdynia became a national *cause célèbre* and secured much popular support.⁴²

The development of the port also excited the minds of Modernists in Poland. Władysław Strzemiński in 1923, for example, produced a highly abstract sculpture which he entitled tendentiously *Design for the Train Station at Gdynia (Projekt dworca kolejowego w Gdyni)*, and exhibited it at



29 Zofia Trzeńska-Kamińska and Jan Zachwatowicz, design for a monument, 'The Unification of Polish Lands', 1931

the Exhibition of New Art in Wilno in the same year. The piece, two blocks of wood painted white and arranged in the manner of a Neo-Plasticist sculpture, not surprisingly, bore very little relationship to the station then under construction. This building, designed by Romuald Miller, was cloaked in a compromising amalgam of 'national' styles such as the 'Baltic-Vistula Gothic' (*Gotyck Nadwiślański*) like a remnant from the nineteenth century. In the first few years of Gdynia's development, most of the town's build-

ings displayed various national style traits. The manor house (*dwór*), for example, was a popular model for domestic housing and smaller civic buildings: the Harbour Master's office, complete with crane, was built, rather curiously, in the style of a manor house, with neat lunette windows piercing the tiled roof and tidy latticed balconies. But from the late 1920s the town's new buildings, like Gdynia's sophisticated harbour engineering, took on a pronounced Modernist character.⁴³

From 1926 young planners such as Adam Kunciewicz, educated at the Warsaw Polytechnic, worked alongside established architects such as Oskar Sosnowski and Roman Feliński as planners for the town and its industrial communications. Following current Modernist planning prescriptions, they laid out the town in functional sectors over a rigid geometric grid. Similarly, many of the apartments and government offices built in the late 1920s and 1930s shared this Modernist tone; mid-rise blocks with metal balconies, and occasionally, maritime motifs such as port holes favoured by a number of Modern Movement architects across Europe including Hans Scharoun in his apartments at the Breslau Housing Exhibition in 1931. Other buildings combined Modernist and neoclassical characteristics, such as the town's post office, designed by Julian Puterman-Sadłowski and erected in 1929 which was a white-walled, flat-roofed, steel-framed structure expressed externally in stripped, undecorated columns and cornices.

But Gdynia's origins in national determination, and more specifically, the anti-German politics underpinning its development, were made clear in a 1930 competition to design a monument to the 'Unification of the Polish Lands' (*Zjednoczenie Ziemi Polskich*) to be erected overlooking Gdynia harbour. The competition judges included some of the leading nationalist artists and designers of the day including Władysław Skoczylas and Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, as well as the Minister responsible for the development of the town, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski. The belligerent aspect of this costly project, to be financed by public subscription at a time of great economic depression, was revealed in the competition brief, reprinted in the pages of *Architektura i Budownictwo* in April 1931: 'It must be a symbol of our, and future generations' task of firm expansion on the Polish coast.'⁴⁴ The diverse entries to the competition were stylistically incoherent and ill suited to the harbour site. Włodzimierz Poray-Gruszczyński and Tadeusz Terlecki, for example, proposed a tower capped with a powerful light. Two heroic figures in a neoclassical style echoing Soviet Socialist Realist aesthetic dictates of the 1930s, were to be placed on a plinth, sixty metres up the side of the eighty-five-metre-high monument.

One critic launched a strong attack on the scheme in an article entitled 'Do we need propaganda monuments?' (*Czy potrzebne są pomniki propagandowe?*) in the same journal.⁴⁵ Władysław Schwarzenberg-Czerny, a

town planner working in the city of Katowice in Upper Silesia who had trained under Adolf Loos in Vienna in the late-1910s, wrote of the scheme's organisers:

They want a monument to stress the 'Polishness' of the place by means of a monument. This issue is ridiculous in itself. The harbour in Gdynia is constructed in accordance with the best technology. It is necessary to make use of all experience wherever it comes from as we want to have whatever is the best, not only in a deeply 'national' sense.

A harbour of a purely Polish character cannot exist without separate shipping in a purely Polish style. Hoists of a purely Polish character cannot exist without statistics and durable materials. Fortunately, navigation, statistics and physical phenomena have always depended on 'international' nature. They firmly resist the 'national song'.⁴⁶

The development of Gdynia, harbour and city, and this contention over national symbols there, illustrates orientations to Modernism obscured by the 'official' activities of the Cracow School in the metropolis and actions of groups like Praesens, both at international congresses and at home. Gdynia, from the late 1920s, was built in the international language of internationalism, Modernism, and yet apparently triggered by nationalist bellicosity. The lack of attention given to this town by historians of the Modern Movement in Poland and abroad, coupled with the relative anonymity of its leading agents, make it difficult to explain this contrariety. A number of possible explanations could be suggested, such as the devolution of regional planning bodies in Poland in the period.⁴⁷ But a less overt reason, though crucial to any discussion of design and nationalism, which will be returned to in the conclusion, is that, whereas nationally symbolic projects, such as government ministries, demanded nationalist design for the national public, places like Gdynia and Upper Silesia, which were the subject of international dispute, demanded displays of international vigour that could be measured by international standards.

Modernist design from the development of Gdynia to the most advanced building schemes of the period, such as Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca's villa of 1928 - 29 in Saska Kępa in Warsaw, a near-complete architectural expression of Le Corbusier's 'Five Points',⁴⁸ all shared a common context: in particular, they were all affected by the state of technological development and the national economy. The apparent plastic and sculptural character of Lachert and Szanajca's villa belied the constructional techniques available to the architects. This house, for three families, was built traditionally in brick rather than in symbolically modern materials such as reinforced concrete. Despite the aspirations of even the most active of internationalists to supra-national practice, exemplified in the 'Functional Warsaw' scheme, Polish architects and designers were hampered by Polish conditions. Szymon Syrkus acknowledged that he was critically

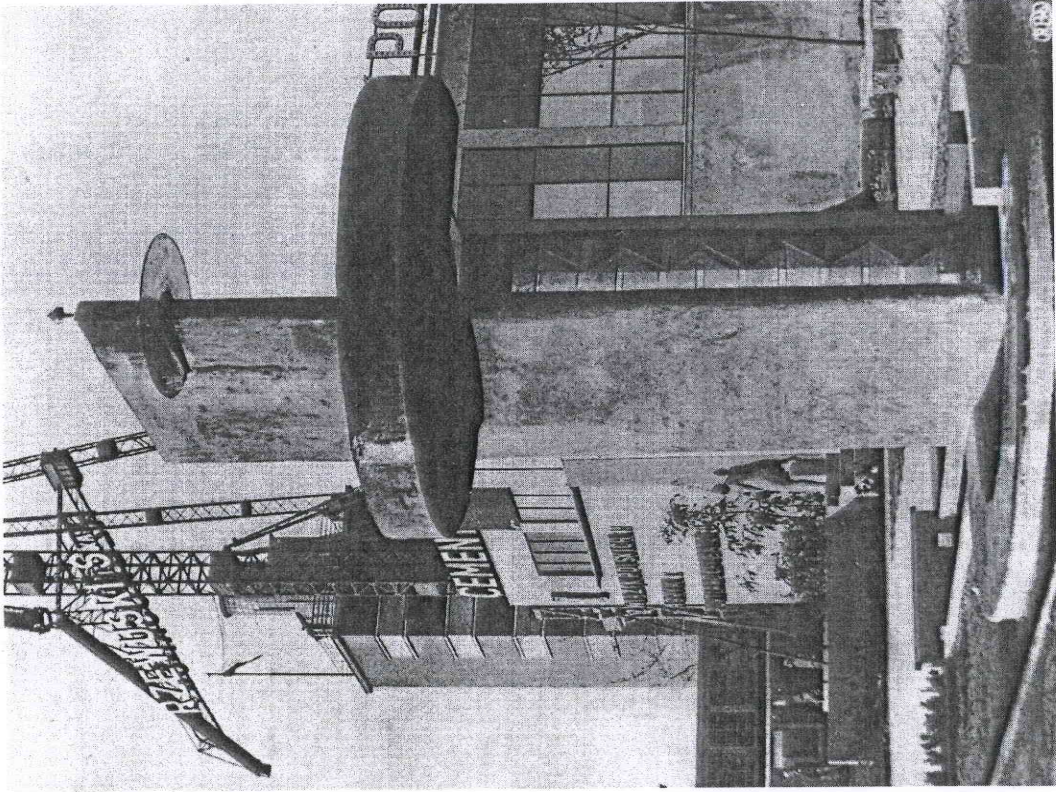
restricted by the state of the national economy: 'The road to English or Dutch architecture is long and Poland cannot enter upon it now. Our aims are the simplest realisations, calculated as inexpensively as possible.'⁴⁹

As we have already seen, Praesens's members held an explicit aim to industrialise housing construction, a common Modern Movement theme. In a few early projects, group members were able to build in reinforced concrete, the Modern Movement material *par excellence* capable of delivering wide spans and great architectural plasticity to 'open up volume'.⁵⁰ Helena and Szymon Syrkus's small 1931 sanatorium in Konstancin, a rare example, was a steel-framed, long terrace built in collaboration with a structural engineer, Stanisław Hempel. This project was a landmark in the development of the 'new' architecture in Poland with its modular units faced with deep balconies divided by glass walls. Furthermore, it presented the Syrkus with an opportunity to design tubular metal furniture that could be folded away for each 'standard' room. But mass production of these designs in tubular steel was beyond the capacity of the Polish furniture industry and these items, made by the firm of Konrad Jarnuszkiewicz i S-ka., were produced in iron and painted black. Despite this, these sparsely furnished room units were the embodiment of the Modern Movement concept of the *Existenzminimum*.

Such successes in the early years of Polish Modernism were rare. Architects were aware of the economic conditions which hindered the development of novel building techniques in Poland.⁵¹ In the spirit of pragmatism, some younger architects invested energy to exploring traditional building types and materials. In this period when timber was a plentiful building material, a potent theme of architectural projects was the wooden dacha. The architectural section in the Praesens exhibition of 1926 at the Zachęta Gallery in Warsaw, for example, displayed a number of schemes exploring the architectural plasticity of wood. Lachert and Szanajca used this opportunity to test the practicability of moveable walls and modifiable plans in wooden villas. Similarly, the architectural press advocated timber homes, with *Architektura i Budownictwo* welcoming (albeit tentatively) Le Corbusier's designs for wooden homes in Errazuris in Chile.⁵² The author of this article, cautious of Corbusier's apparent departure from steel, concrete and glass, stressed the merits of this 'strange house' (*dziwny dom*) as its use of natural materials and adoption of local building traditions (themes that had great currency in Poland). In the face of a national housing crisis, wooden building types attracted the interest of housing authorities looking for a solution to what was a pronounced problem.⁵³ In April 1932 the Warsaw municipal authority, for example, investigated the mass housing potential of wooden architecture.⁵⁴ This keenness for timber can also be seen in furniture designed by Praesens members with Stanisław and Barbara Brukowski's much admired display at

Modernism and pragmatism

The fate of the various Constructivist, Productivist and Functionalist design practices as they matured in the later 1920s, despite laying claims to avant-gardism,⁵⁵ was inevitably tied to the fortunes of their patrons, usually the middle classes, and the material conditions of the Polish economy and industry. The greater part of projects undertaken by Modernist architects,



30 Three-family home designed by Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca, Saska Kępa, Warsaw

31 Cement pavilion designed by Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca of the Prasens group, Universal National Exhibition, Poznań, 1929

like most in Europe, were small villas for rich clients, whilst their projects for 'simultaneous theatres' and high-rise mass housing remained firmly on the drawing board. Polish Modernists appear to have been moved, if not by the opportunities offered by state / national conditions as in the case of Gdynia, then by the pressure of local circumstances. It would be wrong to claim this as a victory of national chauvinism over 'pure' internationalism, but the culture of the partitions had left a legacy of national commitment, in terms of both audience and producers, that was distinct from the cry for 'a free architecture for a free people' in other countries.⁵⁶ This not only reconfirms the importance of analysing Polish Modernism within local conditions as well as international Modernism, but also indicates the context from which the revisionist design practices of the 1930s, which have been described as the 'national-international style',⁵⁷ sprang, as well as what was a last attempt to re-radicalise Modernism.

Markers of a shift within Modernism began to occur around the turn of the decade. One such moment was the ideological split within the Praesens group rent by Strzemiński, Henryk Stażewski and Katarzyna Kobro in 1929 which was precipitated by the preparation of the group's designs for a number of pavilions and interiors at the National Universal Exhibition (*Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa*) in Poznań. These three artists' dissatisfaction with the development of Praesens's ideology focused on two related issues: firstly, over the marginalisation of art within architecture: 'modern art', they were later to write, 'exposing the problems of form, exactitude, purposefulness, economy, organisation, sublimates the feelings which are most closely related to production. Thus, the social influence of art is indirect',⁵⁸ and secondly, they stood against the architectural 'utilitarianism' which stressed modern technologies or narrow notions of social need like the *Existenzminimum* over, what they saw as, the political determination to politicise all social space: 'The final end of architecture is not the building of convenient houses; it is also not the blowing up of abstract sculptures and calling them exhibition pavilions. Its aim is: to be a regulator of the rhythm of social and individual life.'⁵⁹ This artistic trioka aligned with two poets, Jan Brzękowski and Julian Przyboś, in the following year to form the a.r. group.⁶⁰

The artistic and literary members of a.r. displayed their continued aim to exert an influence over modern design in the energy that they devoted to typography. In 1932 they organised an international exhibition of typography in Łódź, Modern Printing (*Drukarstwo Nowoczesne*), which presented work by designers from across Europe, including Jan Tschichold and Walter Drexel. Similarly, Strzemiński wrote a book entitled *Druk Funkcjonalny* (Functional Printing) which was published by the group in their a.r. library (*biblioteka a.r.*) series in 1935. But their successes lay in their attempts to revive abstract art and to re-invest it with a socially

revolutionary character and consequently, in the 1930s, Strzemiński and his colleagues grew increasingly distant from architectural and design issues. In seeking to re-radicalise Modernism in Poland, these nonconformists had far greater influence on the development of abstract painting in Poland, and in fact the whole of Europe. Stażewski, for example, was a leading figure in the Cercle et Carré group founded by Michel Seuphor and Joaquin Torrès-Garcia in Paris in 1930. a.r. were also a leading force behind the foundation of the Museum of Modern Art in Łódź in 1932.⁶¹ The collection, the second of its kind after the Hanover Museum which had been established six years earlier and closed by the Nazis in 1933, contained works by leading European abstract artists including; Jean Arp, Willi Baumeister, Theo van Doesburg and Kurt Schwitters. The genuinely 'European' and artistic character of their activities isolated a.r. from the very different course of national design debates and practice in Poland in the 1930s.

Notes

- 1 T. Sewryn, 'Wnętrze pawilonu polskiego' in *Ilustrowany Kurier Codzienny*, 31 August 1925, pp. 13-15.
- 2 M. Szuka, 'Czy sztuka dekoracyjna' in *Błok*, no. 10, 1925, p. 1, quoted in Huml, *Warszaty Krakowskie*, p. 100 (original emphasis).
- 3 This slogan was the title of a highly influential essay and presentation of Constructivism in Poland by the radical Modernist poet, Tadeusz Peiper, first published in the avant-garde journal *Zwrotnica* in 1922. See T. Peiper, 'Miasto. Masa. Maszyna' in *Tędy. Nowe i sta*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1972, pp. 30-49.
- 4 M. Szuka, 'Reaction to the environment ...' in *Zwrotnica*, no. 30, 4 February 1924, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland 1923-36* (exhibition cat. Museum Folkwang, Essen), 1973, p. 67.
- 5 See N. Kolesnikoff, *Bruno Jasieński: His evolution from Futurism to Socialist Realism*, Wilfred Laurer University Press, Waterloo, Ontario, 1982.
- 6 Communism, viewed from newly independent Poland in the early 1920s, was less associated with internationalism than with her historic enemy, Russia. The Communist Party in Poland was only legalised after 1921 when it decided to accept Polish sovereignty. See N. Bethell, *Gomułka, Pelican*, Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 15-30.
- 7 Wat, *My Century*, p. 7.
- 8 This chapter draws on three excellent catalogues which include translations of key articles and texts published by proponents of Modernism in Poland in the inter-war period. See Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, *Constructivism in Poland 1923-1936* (undated), edited by Hilary Gresty and Jeremy Lewison; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, *Présences Polonoises*, 1983, catalogue/exhibition co-ordinated by Dominique Bozo and Ryszard Stanisławski; and Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland 1923-1936: BŁOK, Praesens, a.r.*, 1973, catalogue prepared by Ryszard Stanisławski.
- 9 T. Żarnowerówna in the catalogue of the Exhibition of New Art, reprinted in Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, *Constructivism in Poland 1923-1936*, pp. 25-7.
- 10 See J. Zagrodzki, *Władysław Strzemiński: in memoriam*, Wyd. Szuka Polska, Łódź, 1988.
- 11 See A. K. Olszewski, *Henryk Berlew, W.A.G.*, Warsaw, 1958.

- 12 A. Turowski, 'Blok (1924-1926)' in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 36.
- 13 H. Berlew, 'Mechano-factura', 1924, in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, pp. 72-4.
- 14 M. Anikst, *Soviet Commercial Design*, Thames and Hudson, London, 1987, pp. 53-5.
- 15 M. Szczuka and T. Żarnowerówna, 'Co to jest Konstruktywizm?' in *Blok*, no. 6-7, September 1924.
- 16 Szczuka and Żarnowerówna, 'Co to jest Konstruktywizm?' in *Blok*, no. 6-7, September 1924.
- 17 The organising committee of this exhibition also included S. Wójcicki, A. Lauterbach and S. Rutkowski.
- 18 E. Norwerth, 'Wystawa Międzynarodowa Architektury Nowoczesnej' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 1-5, 1926, p. 37.
- 19 Norwerth, 'Wystawa Międzynarodowa Architektury Nowoczesnej' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 1-5, 1926, p. 37.
- 20 K. Teige, 'Mundaneum' in *Stavba*, VII, 1928-1929, pp. 145-55 reprinted in Architectural Association, *Czech Functionalism 1918-1938*, A.A., London, 1987, p. 166.
- 21 Strzeziński too attacked 'the architecture of compromise by Le Corbusier and his epigones'. See W. Strzeziński, 'The Principles of New Architecture' in *Linia*, 1931, no. 3, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 109.
- 22 M. Szczuka, 'Sztuka a rzeczywistość' in *Dźwignia*, no. 4, July 1927, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, pp. 96-103.
- 23 Szczuka, 'Sztuka a rzeczywistość' in *Dźwignia*, no. 4, July 1927, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 102.
- 24 The founding members of Praesens were B. Elkouken, J. Golus, K. Kobro, K. Kryński, B. Lachert, J. Malinowski, M. Nicz-Borowiak, A. Rafałowski, H. Stazewski, S. Syrkus, J. Szanajca and S. Zalewski.
- 25 S. Syrkus, 'Preliminarz architektury' in *Praesens*, no. 1, 1926, p. 6.
- 26 Author not acknowledged quoted by Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 23.
- 27 H. Stazewski quoted in O. Czerner, 'In Search of New Content and Form' in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 78.
- 28 Szymon Syrkus and Katarzyna Kobro presented two distinct definitions of Functionalism that indicate the tensions within Polish Modernism that were to effect a further schism in 1929 when Strzeziński, Kobro and Stazewski left Praesens (see below). See K. Kobro, 'Funkcjonalizm' in *Forma*, no. 4, 1936, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, pp. 117-20 and S. Syrkus, 'L'Architecture c'est l'Espace Fonctionnalis Simultanément', 1930, in Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, *Prérences Polonoises*, pp. 207-8.
- 29 H. and S. Syrkus, 'Masowa produkcja mieszkań' in *Dom.Osiedle.Mieszkanie*, no. 9, 1931, p. 2.
- 30 S. Giedeon, 'The Work of the CIAM' in J.L. Martin, B. Nicholson and N. Gabo (eds.), *Circle: International Review of Constructive Art*, 1971, Faber and Faber, London, pp. 272-8, and H. Kolanowska, 'Functional Warsaw. Poland's Participation in CIAM' in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 49-63.
- 31 Syrkus, 'Preliminarz Architektury' in *Praesens*, no. 1, 1926, p. 6. Łowicz papercuts were promoted by the Cracow School as a traditional, vernacular art from north-western Poland.
- 32 T. van Doesburg, 'Ewolucja architektury nowoczesnej w Holandji' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 8/9, 1931, p. 338.
- 33 T. van Doesburg 'Poland: Emancipation from Sensual Lyricism' in *Het Bouwbedrijf*, VII, no. 18, 1930, pp. 358-61, and 'A Forum for Polish Architects' *Het Bouwbedrijf*, VIII, no. 5, February 1931, pp. 87-90 reprinted in T. van Doesburg, *On European Architecture*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 1990, pp. 295-309.

- 34 E. May 'Die Wohnung für das Existenzminimum' presented at the CIAM in 1929, reprinted in T. Benton, C. Benton and D. Sharp, *Form and Function*, The Open University Press, Crosby Lockwood Staples, London, 1975, pp. 202-4.
- 35 M. Steinmann, *CIAM Dokumente 1928-1939*, Birkhäuser, Basel, 1979, pp. 36-73.
- 36 This Warsaw exhibition was jointly organised by Praesens and Polish Society for Housing Reform (*Polskie Towarzystwo Reformy Mieszkanowej*).
- 37 S. Marzyński, 'Wystawa "Mieszkanie Najmniejsze"' in *Architektura i Budownictwo* (issue unknown: volume misbound), 1930, p. 190.
- 38 S. Marzyński, 'Wystawa "Mieszkanie Najmniejsze"' in *Architektura i Budownictwo* (issue unknown: volume misbound), 1930, pp. 188-9.
- 39 M. Horscham, *Modernism in Architecture between the Wars*, unpublished interview / Royal College of Art, London, 1989, appendix 1, pp. 3-4.
- 40 S. Bojko, *Polska Sztuka Plakatu*, W.A.G., Warsaw, 1971, p. 57.
- 41 T. van Doesburg, 'A Forum for Polish Architects' in *Het Bouwbedrijf*, vol. 8, no. 5, February 1931, pp. 87-90 reproduced in van Doesburg, *On European Architecture*, p. 304.
- 42 C. Tighe, *Gdańsk: National Identity in the Polish German Borderlands*, Pluto, London, 1990, pp. 101-2.
- 43 C. M. Gimmich, 'The Free City' Danzig and German Foreign Policy, 1968, p. 109.
- 44 See *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1936 (a special edition dedicated to the architecture of Gdynia).
- 45 Author not acknowledged, 'Konkurs na pomnik "Zjednoczenia Ziemi Polskich" w Gdyni' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5/6, 1931, p. 195.
- 46 W. Schwarzenberg-Czerny, 'Czy potrzebne są pomniki propagandowe?' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4, 1931, p. 163.
- 47 Schwarzenberg-Czerny, 'Czy potrzebne. . . ?' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4, 1931, p. 163.
- 48 K. Pawlikowski, 'Housing Estate, Town, Region, Country' in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 46.
- 49 Le Corbusier, 'Five Points of a New Architecture', *Die Form*, II, 1927, pp. 272-4, reprinted in Benton *et al.*, *Form and Function*, pp. 153-5.
- 50 S. Syrkus quoted in O. Czerner, 'In Search of New Content and Form' in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 74.
- 51 S. Syrkus, 'Architektura opens up volume' in *Machine Age Exposition*, 1927, reprinted in Kettle's Yard Gallery, Cambridge, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 43.
- 52 Steel production, for example, did not reach pre-war output levels until 1937. See Kaser and Radice, *The Economic History of Eastern Europe*, I, p. 215.
- 53 P. M. Lubiński, 'Drzewniani Corbusier' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 8, 1932, p. 258.
- 54 Despite a pronounced housing crisis in Poland in the 1930s, the Depression extinguished the slow growth in building in the late 1920s. In 1932 the building industry contracted from a high of 400,000 employed to around 80,000, placing even greater pressure on an overstretched housing stock.
- 55 Author not acknowledged, 'Próba Uruchomienia Budownictwa Drewnianego' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 8, 1932, p. 162.
- 56 Blok awarded itself the title of 'avant-garde' on the cover of its journal.
- 57 K. Teige, 'Contemporary International Architecture', 1928, in Benton *et al.*, *Form and Function*, p. 200.
- 58 J. A. Mrozek used this phrase in conversation in Zakopane in Autumn 1989.
- 59 *Komunikat a.r.*, no. 2, December 1932.
- 60 W. Strzeziński, 'Zasady nowej architektury' in *Linia* 1931, no. 3, reprinted in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 109.
- 61 a.r. is usually understood to mean 'Revolutionary Artists': see A. Labecka, 'The a.r. group 1929-1936' in Museum Folkwang, Essen, *Constructivism in Poland*, p. 41.
- 62 J. Ojrzewski, 'Sztuki w Łodzi - Kalendarium' in *Projekt*, 2/82, pp. 7-10.

Modernism revised

Poland has not been resurrected to swell the tally of imperialist hyena states.

Jan Baudouin de Courtenay

The intellectual quarrels between the supporters of Modernism and the 'officials' of the national style cooled in the 1930s as other issues rose to dominate design debates. In 1933, for example, twelve prominent Polish printmakers and illustrators, including the 'folkophile' Cracow School illustrator, Edmund Bartłomiejczyk, and the Socialist photo-montager, Mieczysław Berman, formed an elite 'union', the Circle of Graphic and Advertising Artists (*Koło Artystów Grafików-Reklamowych*).¹ This association, which grew rapidly to over fifty members by 1936, did not define itself with an aesthetic or social ideology, but a professional one. The industrial designer, virtually unknown in the underdeveloped manufacturing sector in the 1920s, grew in numbers as industry revived slowly in the years after the Depression. But despite the growing influence of commerce and interest in professionalisation, questions of nation did not recede in the 1930s. Poland, or more particularly the Polish political climate, was in flux: Piłsudskian politics grew increasingly intolerant and leaders of opposition parties were forced into exile or lived under house arrest; the State sought to Polish the Ukrainian minority just as the partitions had sought to deprive the Poles of their Polishness; Józef Beck, Foreign Minister from 1932, ignored traditional allies such as France and displayed interest in alliance with Nazi Germany (a ten-year 'non-aggression' pact was signed in 1934); and Poland sought the status of a 'great power', though in reality she spent most of the decade trying to 'second guess' the intentions of her 'greater' neighbours.² At home the State came into conflict with the working classes in town and country. Agricultural decline in the decade after 1928 was the source of much disillusionment in the countryside, which resulted in violent clashes between the peasantry and the police. While the Depression also provoked thousands of urban workers to strike between 1933 and 1937.³ But despite such pressing economic troubles, Polish international insecurity in the 1930s engendered a degree of social cohesion that went some way to patching these political fissures, just as it had done in the first half of the 1920s.

The decline of Functionalism

In the early 1930s a number of critical voices spoke out against Functionalism. In 1933 Romuald Miller, the architect of Gdynia railway station who had worked with a number of Cracow School designers including Wojciech Jastrzębowski in the 1920s, warned his readers, as joint editor of *Architektura i Budownictwo*, of the dangers of the 'birth of a new snob' who 'believes that statistics is architecture'.⁴ In a similar vein, the Modernist journal *D.O.M.* reported: 'The extremist representatives of "modern architecture" of the 1920s are severely punished for their doctrinaire attitudes and the narrowness which they displayed in the years of their prosperity.'⁵ These 'doctrinaire attitudes' were regarded as a fetishism for 'cosmopolitan' architectural forms unadapted to the Polish climate and local building traditions, and the treatment of residents as a statistical factor in the planning of homes. Such criticisms were also extended to the design of furniture and other household items. Clearly attacking the most radical of Modernist artist-designers like Katarzyna Kobro, Władysław Schwarzenberg-Czerny, an architect and planner, wrote: 'In 1931 there is no place for (...) furniture looking like abstract spatial compositions.'⁶ But neither Miller nor Schwarzenberg-Czerny were out and out revisionists for they did not advocate a return to either 'Les Styles' or the vernacular design theses of the first quarter of the century. Once a student of Adolf Loos, Schwarzenberg-Czerny shared a number of his master's prejudices: 'our interest in ornamentation has definitely been lost, together with those of cannibalism, inquisition, torture, religious wars, etc. The love of ornament and the hatred of clean walls, space and untattooed bodies, is, in the twentieth century, a feature of criminals, degenerates and the teachings of the "professors of applied art"'.⁷

The 'professors of applied art' to whom Schwarzenberg-Czerny referred were those attempting to revive and modernise faltering Cracow School themes in the late 1920s. A group of artists and designers from the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art joined together in 1926 to form a co-operative to design furniture, ceramic, silverware, interiors and textiles under the name of *Ład* (Harmony). The executive committee of this co-operative of artists included many familiar Cracow School figures: Warsaw professors Czajkowski, Jastrzębowski, Stryjeński and Tichy; and students of the Academy Lucjan Kintop and Elenora Plutyńska (and A. Plutyński, an economist). Although this organisation acted in competition with other producers and advertised their wares in the popular and trade press, *Ład's* production was protected from the vicissitudes of commerce by its contacts with state culture. By 1929 it had secured a special subvention from the *Sejm*, the two-chambered Polish Parliament; the support of the Department of the Ministry of Industry and Trade (*Ministerstwo Przemysłu i Handlu*);

and a 400,000 zloty loan from the National Economic Bank (*Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego*): as well as taking possession of four workshops to produce kilims, carpets, tapestries and ceramics and a dyeing studio, and securing agreements with a number of furniture producers across Poland.⁸

Ład designed ten rooms (*Palac Sztuki*) at the Universal National Exhibition (*Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa*) in Poznań in 1929. This exhibition was assembled to celebrate ten years of national independence under the auspices of the Minister of Industry and Trade, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, a prominent figure behind the development of Gdynia. Beyond its national symbolic function, the exhibition's location in city in the west of the country was, like the geopolitical orientation of Piłsudskian politics, designed to establish strong trade contacts with Western Europe.⁹ *Ład* published a statement of 'aims and works' in the exhibition catalogue, which stressed their self-perceived national role: 'Not aiming at the foundation of great factories requiring capitalist management, *Ład* wishes to possess our own experimental studios, like departments, in order to classify designs and execute models from beginning to end in the intended material, serving in this way to prepare prototypes for the nation's industry.'¹⁰ This notion of the group's role sprang, according to Czesław Knothe, a founder member, 'from the conviction that all hand-made works might be automatically copied by machines. The idea was that machines reproduce things and nothing more.'¹¹ Privileged by their proximity to official culture, *Ład* were given their own wing in the Palace of Art at the Poznań exhibition in which to mount their own sub-exhibition of interiors. Whereas the Modernist group Prasens were largely excluded from the official sphere (bar a restrained interior for the Polish Treasury (*Ministerstwo Skarbu*) in a government pavilion) and only found opportunity to express their architectural vision in a number of commercial pavilions promoting artificial fertilisers, cement and spirits.¹²

Ład, according to A. K. Olszewski, produced 'modernised folk art' (*zmodernizowana ludowość*) for state commissions and wealthy patrons.¹³ Like national style advocates before them, they continued to treat the vernacular as a repository of inspirational themes. *Ład* members, for example, went into the regions in the 1930s to establish weaving and embroidery workshops in rural communities to execute their designs, and to collect traditional fabrics.¹⁴ But they regarded their work to be in a 'modern' idiom, produced in opposition to dogmatic Modern Movement tenets. Marian Sigmund, a furniture designer who joined *Ład* in the late 1920s, recorded his objection to 'Bauhaus-inspired chair design' which ignored proven traditional forms such as tapered legs as 'wilful formalism'.¹⁵ Equally, Sigmund claimed that *Ład* were open to new technologies and believed that their designs met the demands of modern life.



32 Interior designed by Przemysław Kocowski (with a lamp designed before the First World War by Józef Czajkowski and kilims by Helena Bukowska), Universal National Exhibition, Poznań, 1929

Ład's design aesthetic was most clear in the interiors designed by the association's members. Przemysław Kocowski designed a dining-room which was made by the firm of Z. Szerbiński and Sons in Warsaw for the Poznań exhibition which was furnished in a restrained style at some distance from the vernacular. Although the crisp angular motifs worked into the marquetry on his solid cabinet and sculpted chair-backs can be traced to folk roots, these items of furniture reflect the polished style of the 'late' Cracow School. The concern with carved decoration and expressed construction in furniture design, characteristic of the Arts and Crafts in Poland, had been largely relinquished and only remained as intentional skeuomorphs: these decorative patterns, applied as wood surfaces, were like formal remnants which were no longer derived from technics or function: their purpose was semiotic. Some members of *Ład* expressed their 'Polishness' in more immediate ways by employing stylised national symbols and motifs. The crowned eagle, a recurring theme, was exploited in the tapestries and kilims designed by Lucjan Kintop and Julia Grodecka. Not surprisingly, *Ład* were the recipients of a number of prestigious state commissions in the 1930s such as a number of Polish official interiors abroad, including embassies in London, Paris, Berlin and Stockholm.

Despite their possession of workshops, their academic base in the Warsaw Academy and their proximity to official culture, this group became an increasingly marginal voice in Polish design. Sections of the 'progressive' design press, sympathetic to Modernism, were dismissive of their activities. Jerzy Hryniewiecki, the author of Goliath 'Miesian' buildings in Poland in the 1960s, in an article previewing *Ład's* tenth anniversary exhibition at the Institute for the Promotion of Art (*Institut Propagandowy Sztuki*) to be held in February 1936, was particularly acid. This article displayed the entire gamut of Modernist themes and prejudices: from an attack on Secessionist design (the author identifying *Ład's* roots in the reform of the arts and crafts at the beginning of the century); a criticism of their designs as 'new bourgeois' taste; a demand for Poles to accept the best of foreign invention and production; to a rallying call for modern Polish designers to explore 'new materials and technologies' and 'new functions'. Hryniewiecki concluded with an assault on the Workshop tradition: 'nowadays we do not believe that "*Ład*" is the foundation nor the foundry of new art'.¹⁶ Although this co-operative tended to draw attacks from such advocates of Modernism, in the field of textile design they were, almost invariably, applauded for their achievements.¹⁷ In reporting this anniversary exhibition, a writer in *Wiadomości Literackie* (Literary News), though sharing much of Hryniewiecki's dissatisfaction with a 'return to traditionalism' (*powrót do tradycjonalizmu*), wrote that 'the kilims, rugs and woven fabrics were, as always, excellent'.¹⁸ Despite the criticisms raised of this co-operative, *Ład's* membership, as pedagogues at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art and as professional bureaucrats in the arts, warrant acknowledgement as an active lobby in Polish design: they were the keepers of the Cracow School tradition.

Rapprochement

An accord between proponents of internationalist Modernism and nationalist vernacularism occurred in the early 1930s that Irena Huml has called a 'course of co-existence' (*koegzystencja kierunków*).¹⁹ Increasingly, Modernist designers relinquished the search for universal tenets that characterised the early years of the Modern Movement for a less dogmatic attitude to design that incorporated some of the local character that Warchałowski and his Cracow School colleagues had argued would maintain a distinct Polish voice in a 'cosmopolitan' world. Although, as we have already seen, some pragmatic Modernist designers had expressed sensitivity to the 'Polish condition' in the 1920s, a number of major state commissions in the 1930s took up these concerns with enthusiasm rather than from expediency. A range of projects could be cited here, such as the furnishing of two major state liners, the *m/s Piłsudski* and *m/s Batory* in 1934–36. The interiors of

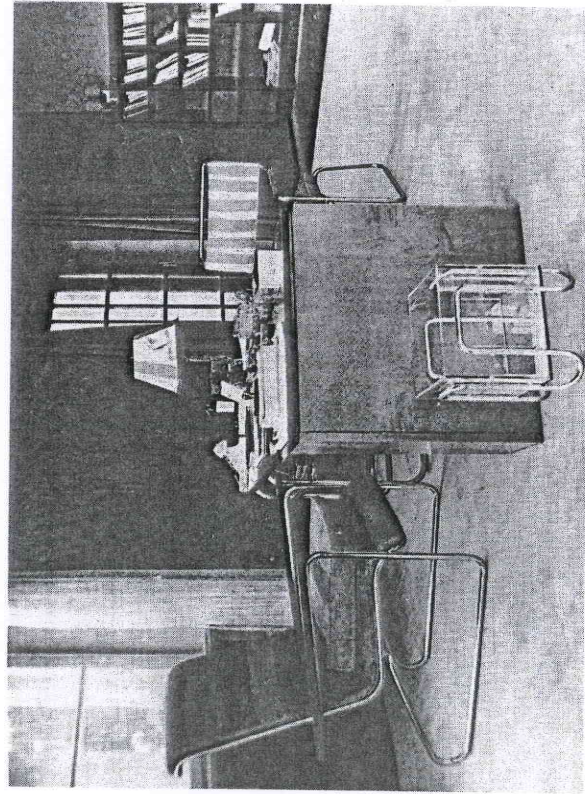
m/s Piłsudski were commissioned by a four-man artistic panel including a key figure from the Cracow School, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, and Praesens member, Stanisław Brukowski. Furthermore, the range of designers and artists employed on these major maritime projects was as marked with the spirit of consensus as the panel that selected them. They included artists working on wall panels as stylistically diverse as Edward Manteuffel, a designer of exuberant Modernist posters, and Antoni Kenar, then resident in Warsaw, but a reviver of the Zakopane tradition in his expressive carvings (he returned from Warsaw to Zakopane in 1938 to teach sculpture at the School of Wood Industry).

The building of a presidential summer residence in Wisła between 1929 and 1931 was the major project of rapprochement in the period. Its architect, Adolf Szyszko-Bohusz, was an uncompromising nationalist whose commitment to architectural styles wavered a good deal more than his patriotism. Within a few months either side of this commission he designed his own home, a small medievalist villa in Przegorzały and the 'International Style' gallery, House of Artists (*Dom Plastyków*), in Cracow. The presidential residence was known as the 'Little Castle' (*Zameczek*) because it was sited in the Beskidy mountains, overlooking the Vistula river, like a traditional hunting lodge. Despite Szyszko-Bohusz's reputation as a historicist and as a member of the Cracow School (by his membership of the Cracow Workshops), he designed a readily identifiable Modernist retreat for his friend, the State President, Ignacy Mościcki. Its shell was composed from a series of flat-roofed geometric blocks, over a free plan of open spaces that were partitioned by curtains. Other Modernist aspects included the prominent fenestration and the overall sculptural composition of the architectonic elements which diminished the effect of the façade. The 'progressive' tone of the *Zameczek* was tempered by a number of picturesque 'Polish' devices: its reinforced concrete frame was clad in traditional rough sandstone from Polish Silesia; and the main doorway was framed by striated plasterwork, characteristic of Renaissance architecture in central Europe.

The *Zameczek* interiors also shared this duality. Szyszko-Bohusz was joined in the task of furnishing and decorating the public and private spaces inside the castle by Andrzej Pronaszko and Włodzimierz Padlewski. Pronaszko was an arch-Modernist painter, having begun his career as a founder of the Polish Expressionists (*Ekspresjoniści Polscy*) in 1917, had been a leading participant in the Formist movement in painting in the early-1920s and was, at the time of the *Zameczek* commission, a member of Praesens.²⁰ Szyszko-Bohusz and Pronaszko, as their careers indicate, appeared to lie on opposite sides of a cultural spectrum ranged along a traditionalist / Modernist axis, yet, with Padlewski, they produced highly accomplished and homogeneous designs. Like the edifice itself, their

interiors signalled 'modernity': the furniture, for example, was made with chromed tubular steel with cantilevered seats. Despite functionalist claims in the architectural press to their 'durability' (*trwałość*), these chairs and desks made by the firm of Jarnuszkiewicz from Warsaw were not utilitarian designs for mass production.²¹ They were intended to express the advanced nature and sophistication of Polish material culture and taste: the fabric seats of the chairs in the President's office, for example, were made from grey antelope skin. The walls of the interiors, Pronaszko's responsibility as a painter, drew much favourable comment. His decorative scheme, like a geometric abstract painting, carefully contrasted different light intensities of reds, greys and yellows. Sections of the design press regarded the *Zameczek* commission as an important step on the path towards the rapprochement of 'one's own-ness' (*swojskość*), i.e. Polish introspection, and Modernism:

The interior of the *Zameczek* (...) is one of the first attempts to solve the problem of design in the official sphere. It is very significant. For several years, and especially lately, general commissions were the responsibility of a group of specialists from the societies of decorative art who propagated such slogans as 'traditionalism' in opposition to 'alienness', pseudo-glorification of handicraft, and exploiting the legacy of Norwid. Professor A. Szysko-Bohusz gave the official interior of the *Zameczek* a new sense of place, and with A. Pronaszko,



33 Presidential office, *Zameczek*, designed by Adolf Szysko-Bohusz, Włodzimierz Padlewski and Andrzej Pronaszko, Włsla, 1929–1931

has created wide colourful surfaces without turning the rooms into tents with kilims on the walls, nor covering the walls in wooden panelling (...) or unnecessary wood carving.²²

The author was correct in identifying the *Zameczek* as an early indication of a new type of state patronage in the 1930s. But it could also be argued that it was an unusual project for which a Modernist design language was apt. As a private retreat for Mościcki, the tempered Modernism employed by Szysko-Bohusz and his collaborators offered an airy and urbane environment matching the chic sanatoria and hotels then being erected in modern architectural idioms across Europe. Other more public schemes in the 1930s did not share this 'enlightened' tone. But before discussing these projects, it is worth surveying other turns in the fortunes of Modernism in Poland.

Regionalism

In the 1930s an intellectual cabal set about interpreting the development of the Modern Movement for a greater public. William Curtis has noted that: 'Sigfried Giedion, Nikolaus Pevsner, and Henry-Russell Hitchcock were perhaps too intent on defining the generic characteristics of the "International Style" to accommodate buildings that deviated from this whitewashed and plastered uniform front'.²³ It is ironic that as Hitchcock and Johnson set about defining the Modern Movement as 'The International Style' for the American public, in their book of the same name, that style faced imminent national dispersal in Europe.²⁴ In Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia flat roofs, whitewashed walls and dynamic architectural forms were about to be erased from the vocabulary of architectural practice by hysterical state dictates, and in other countries, such as Sweden, distinct local accents were to be heard in the language of Modernism. Internationalism remained largely characteristic in the activities of exclusive societies like CIAM; of cosmopolitans like Le Corbusier, who, starved of commissions, designed utopian plans for cities across Europe and Latin America; and of exiles like Walter Gropius. The Modern Movement in the mid-1930s became an intellectual club for visionary designers that was buffeted across a divided Europe. Like a metaphor for the condition of Modernism, CIAM met in July 1933 aboard a liner, the *Patris*, to sail the Mediterranean.

Two of the co-signatories of the *Athens Charter*, a declaration of modern town planning ideals, drafted aboard the *Patris*, were Szymon and Helena Syrkus.²⁵ These national 'representatives', by their adherence to Modernist theory, appear to have become increasingly marginalised in design debates at home as the decade progressed. Jan Goliński, a member of the *Lad* group, for example, writing in *Architektura i Budownictwo* in 1936, made a covert criticism of the Syrkus's faith in the plastic qualities of

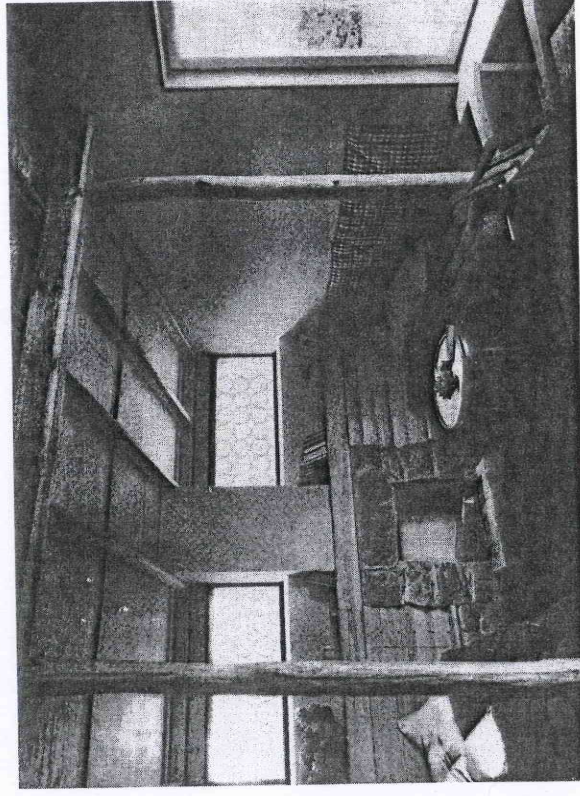
Modernist architecture and their slogan of 'opening up volume' when he wrote that 'the shape of space and its greatness depends on the perspective of the viewer rather than any great principle of space'.²⁶ Arguing for a modern architecture that met local conditions, in terms of climate, construction and materials, many young architects regarded Functionalism to be doctrinaire and alien. These opponents were not always critics of 'progress' in architecture although it should be noted that some shrill conservative voices were also to be heard. Members of the society of graduates of the Warsaw Polytechnic faculty of Architecture, such as Michał Kostranecki, expressed in their society journal their low opinion of the preceding generation of Functionalists. Kindred spirits such as Piotr Lubinski attacked 'Corbusian architecture "made in Poland"' as a 'fatal complex' lacking sculptural qualities, with its 'noble' coatings dirtied by the Polish climate and for the fetishism of pseudo-technological detail.²⁷ Reflecting these concerns and incorporating ideas that had circulated earlier, such as the interest in wooden housing types, a building and design practice emerged in the mid-1930s that can be called 'Regionalism'. Regionalism was not an outright rejection of Modernism but a revision of its social and political agenda by a new generation of architect-activists. Furthermore, much of the earnestness and social commitment expressed by the design radicals of the 1920s had evaporated. As will be seen below, this was not quite, as A.K. Olszewski has suggested, 'a return to the problems of the national style'.²⁸ But it should be noted that the Regionalist themes favoured by some of the leading designers in the late 1930s were the basis of a decorative style difficult to distinguish from the work of some members of the *Lad* group.

An important advocate of Regionalism in the mid-1930s was the journal *Arkady* (Arcades).²⁹ First published in 1935, under the editorship of Wanda Filipowiczowa, this magazine, aimed at a broader market than the professional journals, published articles on modern design in popularist tone. In its April 1936 issue, for example, a writer drew the attention of the reader to an article on the light and hygienic character of the latest bathroom with these words: 'National cultures can be measured by the amounts of soap that they use.'³⁰ If radical architects and designers in the 1920s had been forced to accommodate the bourgeoisie in order to secure commissions, in the 1930s Polish Modernists openly embraced their wealthy patrons.

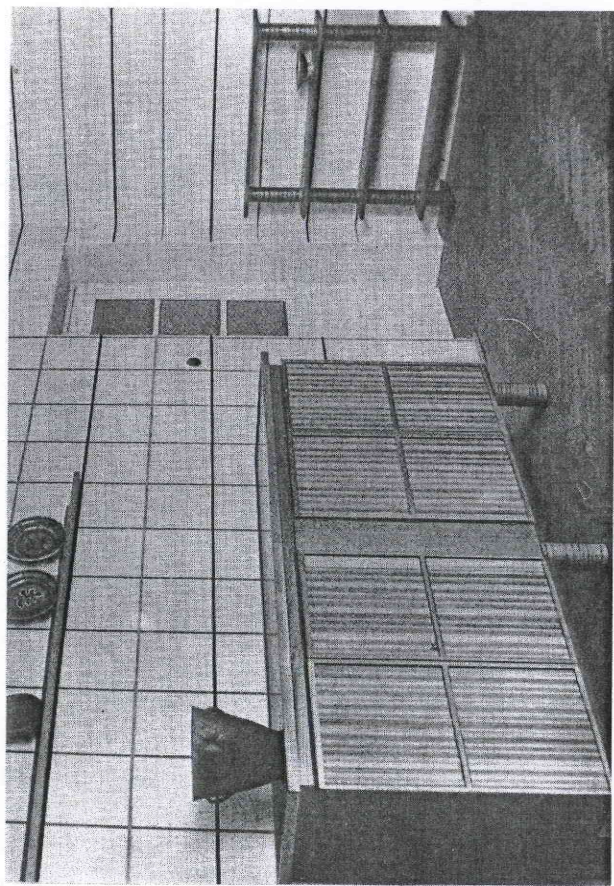
The turn to Regionalist themes is best illustrated by the buildings and interiors designed by Jan Bogusławski, a graduate of both the Faculty of Architecture at the Warsaw Polytechnic and Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In the mid-1930s he designed a number of small villas including two summer houses in Komorów outside Warsaw. Both were modest wood and stone 'weekend homes' (*domy week-end'owe*) constructed from local materials selected for their textural qualities and left untreated or simply stained. The main room of the second villa built in 1936, for example, was

supported by stripped oak trunks. In this modest house clear analogies can be found to vernacular building techniques, such as its slant timber roof supported by exposed beams. But Bogusławski's design was no essay in tradition: it was self-consciously modern; the plan was open and light; the small kitchen was equipped with the latest domestic technology; and the windows were large and well appointed. The overall character of this small home was of comfortable propriety: the rough stone fireplace was flanked by neat hidden pine drawers; and it was furnished with simple wooden tables and wicker-seated chairs which tended neither to the vernacular, nor the pseudo-technological. But this home was not an experiment in cheap mass housing nor new building types for the peasantry: it was a summer house for a wealthy family and included a room for a servant. Bogusławski was also much in demand as an interior designer in the capital in the late 1930s.³¹ Although he relinquished some of the 'primitive' character of the Komorów villas in these urban projects, he maintained unmistakably his Regionalist enthusiasm. A studio for an unnamed architect designed by Bogusławski and illustrated in *Arkady* in 1938, with its exposed stripped beams and rough plasterwork, was palpably 'Polish' to the touch.³²

Bogusławski was not the sole advocate of this self-consciously local Modernism. In May 1935, the Housing Building Exhibition (*Wystawa Budowlano Mieszkaniowa*) organised by the Polish Society for Housing Reform (*Polskie Towarzystwo Reformy Mieszkaniowej*) and sponsored by the state-owned National Domestic Bank (*Bank Gospodarstwa Krajo-*



34 Week-end home interior designed by Jan Bogusławski, Komorów, 1937



35 Kitchen interior at the Housing Building Exhibition designed by Barbara Brukalska, Warsaw, 1935.

wego), opened in Kolo, a suburb of Warsaw. This exhibition, the third in a series of social housing exhibitions in Warsaw in the early 1930s (initiated by the Minimum Flat exhibition in 1930), displayed a range of housing types which were intended as cheap homes for workers. The pragmatic character of the venture was indicated by the director of the Bank, Tadeusz Garbusiński: 'The aim of the exhibition is popular enlightenment - a didactic display for a broad social circle who are building homes for their own use concerning every issue connected with building small houses; especially the selection of the site, provision for communications, hygiene and sanitation, as well as rational, economic and aesthetic housing types'.³³ Whereas the previous exhibition, entitled the 'Inexpensive Home' (*Tani Dom Wlasny*) held in Bielany in Warsaw in 1932, had been regarded as a 'distinctly experimental' venture 'both technically and architecturally', the 1935 exhibition was regarded to be more 'mature' (*dojrzała*) in character.³⁴

The exhibition over twenty small villas, six semi-detached houses and two long terraces, was didactic and pedagogic. Models of ideal bathrooms and kitchens furnished in modern 'hygienic' materials such as chrome and 'rational' (*racjonalna*), i.e. tubular steel furniture, were contrasted through didactic models and photographs with examples of the lamentable living conditions of many at the time. Like earlier exhibitions, architects, manufacturers and designers were invited to design the furnishings and interior

schemes for the buildings on site. These designers included *Lad*, whose 'excellently crafted furniture' was criticised for being out of scale with the needs of a small flat,³⁵ and the Konrad Jarnuszkiewicz company, which drew commendation from some sections of the design press for its novel steel furniture.³⁶ A number of revisionist features drawn from tradition and determined by available building techniques and materials could be found in the flat-roofed, whitewashed villas with projecting balconies designed by different architects including the Brukalski partnership. The kitchen of their villa contained a massive cupboard, an exercise in geometry, which was made in pine and stood solidly on fat chiselled legs. This piece of furniture was free from any decorative effects, bar the natural grain of the wood. The walls of this kitchen were patterned with a stark geometric grid, but softened with vernacular pottery vessels placed around the room. The difference between this interior and those designed by the Brukalski partnership in the 1920s is striking and illustrates the shift that had occurred in design thought in Poland in the course of these years. They had originally established their international reputation for the design of housing estates such as the long terrace of apartments in Suzina Street in the Żoliborz district of Warsaw built in 1932: the standardised housing types there had been designed to contain a 'kitchen-laboratory' (*kuchnie-laboratoria*) replete with metal furniture and industrial finishes.

A street of detached homes with pitched and tiled roofs, and exposed brickwork chimneys designed by T. Cwierzński and R. Gürtler ran along the western edge of the site, adding architectural diversity to the exhibition. Piotr Lubiński, writing in *Arkady*, expressed a hint of regret when he wrote:

The achievements in architecture are absolutely uniform, healthy, direct and intentional, but, most importantly, mature. And that is the great value of the Kolo exhibition. Free from fashion, novelty and the influence of so called experts, it may be that these architects appear a little monotonous and uninteresting, but nevertheless it (the exhibition) is without doubt good. (...) The houses at Kolo are 'orientated to living' (*życiowe*), i.e. in their plans, in their diversity and arrangement, in their comfort, in their practicality.³⁷

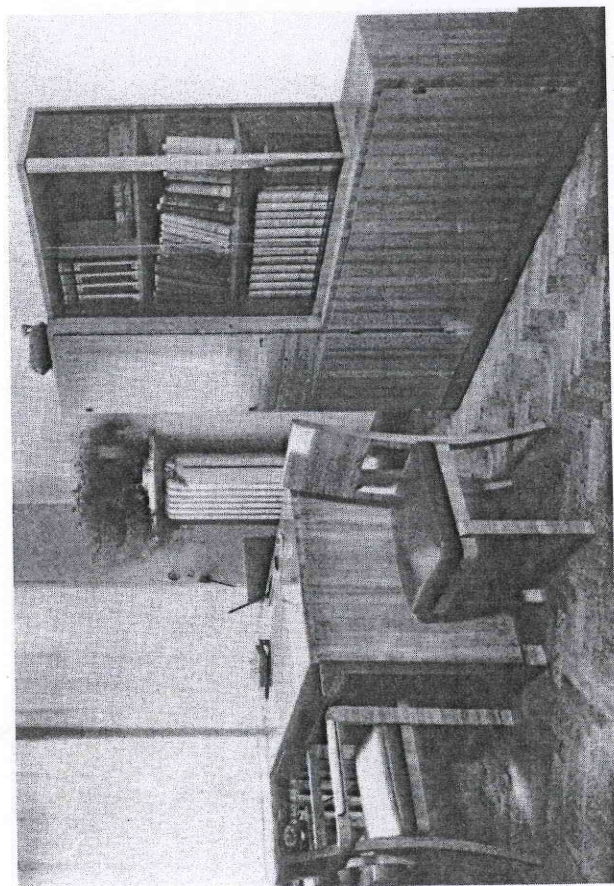
If Bogusławski was the arch-stylist of Regionalism, then the exhibitors at the Building Homes Exhibition were its pragmatic contingent.

The Regionalist trend reached its apotheosis in interior design and furnishing. Under the direction of Stefan Sienicki, an architect who had been employed as a furniture designer for Thonet Mundus, the Studio of Interior and Utensils (*Studium Wnętrz i Sprzęt*) was established in the Faculty of Architecture of Warsaw Polytechnic in 1936.³⁸ This unit designed items of furniture as prototypes for the Polish furniture industry with the recognition that this was an industry largely still constituted by small manufacturers and workshops. Accordingly, Sienicki placed emphasis on realisable

projects using native materials with appeal to the market, i.e. the middle classes. Furniture designs were therefore evaluated in terms of comfort and durability, and not by the standards of technologies as yet unavailable in Poland. In a self-consciously populist article in *Arkady* in 1935, for example, he advocated the adoption of open ergonomic principles, implicitly rejecting the faith in standardisation and 'types' favoured by the young Modern Movement as well as their banishment of the passion for ornament to the private domain.³⁹ The Studio brought together young architects, including Sienicki, frustrated by the difficulties of securing commissions to build in the 1930s.⁴⁰ Professor Oskar Sosnowski, an *éminence grise* in the Polish architectural profession in the inter-war period, claimed that Sienicki's Studio constituted a new stage in the pro-fessional specialisation of design practice, as experts who dedicated their collective energy to designing single items within the domestic and public interior.⁴¹

In March 1936, *Architektura i Budownictwo* published four articles reviewing and theorising the development of Modernism to that date and suggesting forthcoming trends in interior design. These articles by practising architects (of whom three were members of Sienicki's Studio and the fourth, a member of *Lad*), attacked stridently the Functionalism of the 1920s and set an agenda for the future development of the Polish interior.⁴² But it should be stressed that these were not manifestos centred on a singular ideology: the authors, following the individualism that they proclaimed in design, differed in their vision of the modern interior. For Bolesław Szmidt and Kazimierz Prószyński, the Modernism of the 1920s was an important but outmoded phase in the development of design. In these years the avant-garde had sought to purge design of 'eclecticism', 'the imitation of the past' and 'traditionalism'. But both argued that practice had reached an impasse which, according to Szmidt, was due to the 'grey' and 'hopeless' imitation of the 'pioneers'; Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright and 'the Dutch'. This author placed his faith in a revival of creative imagination to produce new 'monumental interiors' exploiting the expansive potential of new technologies, materials, colour, and modern lighting. Yet paradoxically his inspirational source, a model of 'creative fantasy' (*fantazja twórcza*) and 'lesson for us', in this article, was Michaelangelo's Biblioteca Laurenziana in Florence of 1524. Szmidt's essay was tinged with classical historicist accents, a phenomenon found with increasing frequency in Polish design debates in the mid-1930s.

In contrast, his Studio colleague, Prószyński, found a more pragmatic reason for his rejection of 'pure, clean forms' in their failure to achieve popular favour. He also raised his critical sights at the exponents of the Cracow School tradition by accusing them of replacing rich decoration with rich materials (though acknowledging the historical significance of



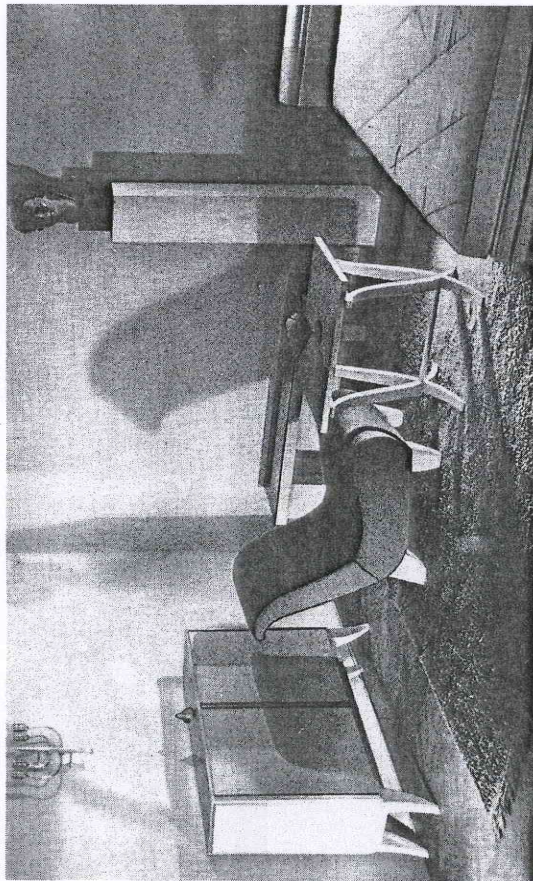
36 Office in the Ministry of Religion and Public Education designed by Stefan Sienicki, 1935

their Arts and Crafts ideology of 'expressed construction'). Prószyński's primary aim was to educate the Polish consumer and the Polish manufacturer to value the merits of light and clean modern furniture designs in the face of imports from Germany and the 'kleptomania' of internationalism, i.e. the way in which Polish designers and manufacturers copied the fashionable modern designs in vogue across Europe. In return he was prepared to give his assent to the decorative and expressive elements that the Polish consumer and national traditions of furnishing demanded.

These four articles were illustrated with over twenty examples of the best recent architect-designed furniture and interior schemes produced in Poland, including a number of interiors at the Kofo exhibition. Sienicki, for example, was represented by his project for new offices of the Ministry of Religion and Public Education in Warsaw. These rooms make interesting contrast with the original designs produced by Jastrzębowski in 1928 described earlier.⁴³ Sienicki, in these chairs, desks and cabinets, carefully played down any Cracow School School associations. These modest and efficient items of furniture were not carved or decorated in any way, yet their quality was self-evident, notably in the simple veneering covering the laminated chair legs.

The high point of Regionalism in Polish design came in March 1937 at an exhibition in Warsaw's Institute for the Promotion of Art. This show,

Architectural Interiors (*Architektura Wnętrza*), was organised by Sienicki's Studio and the Guild of Crafts (*Izba Rzemieślnicza*) to be both a didactic exposition of the Studio's ideology and to promote their designs to potential manufacturers. The exhibits, seventeen sets of inexpensive furniture produced at a cost of 1,500 zloty or less, designed by the Studio and made by the Guild's members, were diverse in character. Although it should be noted that the price was only affordable by the affluent: factory workers lived frugal lives on the 10 to 30 zloty they received in wages each week. Sienicki exhibited a jazzy plant stand made simply from two sheets of laminated wood, and a dining-room scheme furnished with rigid upright



37 'Lady's Room' designed by Kazimierz Prószyński at the Architectural Interiors Exhibition, Warsaw, 1937

chairs made from struts of birch, that one observer was tempted to call 'Teutonic' (*Teutoński*).⁴⁴ Collectively, the sometimes sophisticated exhibits shared little more in common than the use of natural, indigenous materials such as furs and native woods. Although they could all be described as 'modern', hints of decorative tendencies and historicism were obvious. It is interesting to note that both Sienicki and Prószyński designed tables that were supported by a cross frame, a traditional vernacular con- structural form. Prószyński turned this into a decorative motif, for the curved legs of this table were echoed in those of an upholstered chair and cabinet in this 'Lady's Room' (*Pokój Pani*).

Although this exhibition was a marked success in terms of attendance, the critical response was more mixed. While *Arkady's* reviewer, Zygmunt

Skibniewski, regarded it as one of the most important exhibitions in recent years,⁴⁵ many other commentators were scathing. In response, the organiser, Sienicki, had the 'Last Word' (*Ostatnie słowo*), two months after the exhibition had closed, in an apologetic article under that title in *Arkady*.⁴⁶ He felt obliged to respond to his critics who had lamented the failure to collaborate with manufacturers which had been his main aim and the Studio's *raison d'être*. Beyond finding fault in the craftsmen's work (over shortcomings in design), Sienicki took easy refuge in the traditional realms of national sentiment:

Despite great public, professional and critical interest the main purpose of this exhibition was understood and appreciated by very few people. The Studio of Interiors and Utensils (...) has the main purpose of combating the foreign designs which are used by our craftsmen and manufacturers. These alien designs and patterns, as well as our unprofessional drawings copied from foreign magazines combine, unfortunately, with a lack of contact with Polish architects.⁴⁷

Poland was not unique in Europe in developing a 'local' Modernism. Scandinavian designers were widely regarded across Europe to have made a particularly regional impact on the development of the Modern Movement. The influence of figures like the Finnish architect, Alvar Aalto, working in close accord with local craftsmen, and the Dane, Poul Henningsen, was felt in Britain from 1930.⁴⁸ Despite close historical, political and cultural contacts between Poland and Scandinavia and the Baltic states, Polish designers do not appear to have been greatly influenced by ideas from the North until the mid-1930s.⁴⁹ Alvar Aalto's work, for example, does not figure in the pages of the 'progressive' and actively internationalist journal *Architektura i Budownictwo* until 1933.⁵⁰ But by 1935 Scandinavian design appears to have made a strong impression, even outside strictly professional circles in Poland. In that year a state office, the Chief Wood Federation Committee (*Rada Naczelna Związków Drzewnych*), expressed strong interest in the laminated plywood furniture designed by Aalto. For Polish architects and designers, the impact of Scandinavian Regionalism appears to be less a case of influence than a confirmation of practice. Articles in the partisan journal *Arkady*, such as Tadeusz Berlinerblau's discussion of five housing colonies outside Stockholm, celebrated the Scandinavian achievement of the fusion of tradition and contemporaneity, and the employment of local materials and building techniques.⁵¹ In 1938 an exhibition of Swedish design held in the Institute for the Promotion of Art was a crowning testimony to the efforts of the proponents of Regionalism in Poland. They saw it as another way in which to influence furniture producers and popular taste. These items of furniture and interior schemes designed by J. Franck, A. Larsson, Elias Svedburg and Carl Malmsten and produced by the firms of R. B. Svensk Mobelfabrikern and A. B. Nordisk were all typified by high-quality natural

materials, a 'tasteful' restrained character and a domestic function. Polish critics welcomed every exhibit. Piotr Lubiński, a member of the Studio of Interiors and Utensils, for example, called it an exhibition in the 'right direction' (*właściwy kierunek*) and advised all furniture designers and manufacturers to visit it.⁵²

Monumentalism

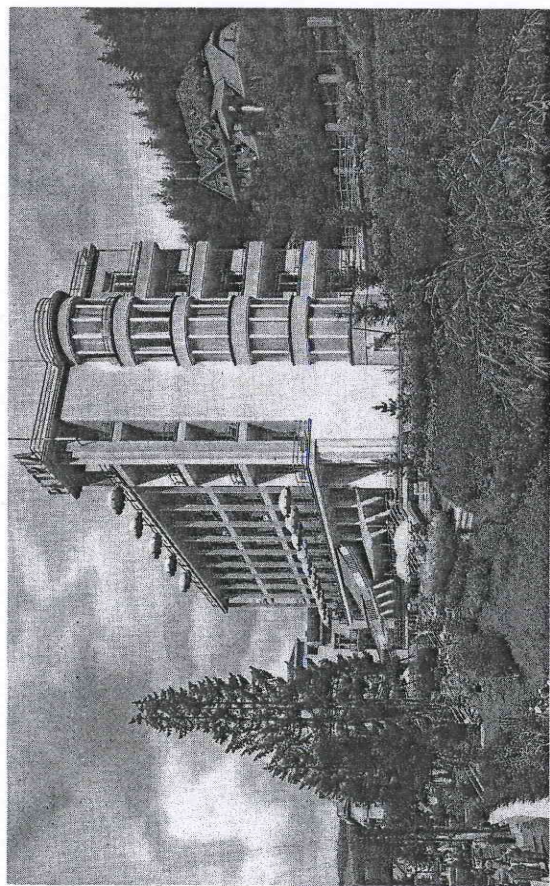
Scandinavia was not the only home to foreign models with appeal to Polish designers. The stripped neoclassical architecture sponsored by a vigorously interventionist cultural policy in Fascist Italy appeared, to some observers, to have achieved a balance between national tradition and modernity. Similarly, the drive behind the rise of Classicism in Poland in the 1930s, like much of Europe, was, in part, a *rappel à l'ordre* issued by national chauvinism. In Poland the far Right discredited the internationalism of the Modern Movement in much the same terms as the Nazi's venomous charges of 'rootless, Jewish, Bolshevik cosmopolitanism'.⁵³ For although in the pre-1914 period classical styles had been almost entirely absent from the search for a national style, by the 1930s Classicism had become an important current in Polish design and art, and had associations with an increasingly brutal state.

The 1930s saw anxious state attacks on the left resulting in concentration camps, show trials and political exiles. After Piłsudski's death in May 1935, his successor, Colonel Śmigły-Rydz, led a pale shadow of a democracy until the Second World War. Whilst, as Norman Davies has argued, "Polishness" was the touchstone of respectability in the inter-war period, after the ascendancy of the *Sanacja* (Moral Renewal) regime to power following the May 1926 coup, and increasingly through the 1930s, this patriotism became a conscious exclusion of the many national minorities in Poland.⁵⁴ A muscular 'cult of the state', fostered by the Right, proved to have great appeal amongst a large proportion of the intelligentsia, and Polish universities bred disturbing numbers of neo-right wing and anti-Semitic activists.⁵⁵ In 1937 Śmigły-Rydz formed the Camp of National Unity (*Obóz Zjednoczenia Narodowego*) which, under slogans stressing national co-operation over partial political or social interests, brought Fascist groups closer to the reins of power. Bolesław Piasecki's Phalanx (*Falanga*) organisation, for example, gained control of the youth wing of the Camp of National Unity. Although it would be an exaggeration to describe the Polish State as Fascist in the 1930s, clear parallels in government policy can be identified with those of Benito Mussolini. Piłsudski, and his successor, Śmigły-Rydz, shared a belief in the need for Poland to display national virility so as to be seen as a 'great power' in the face of its historical and geographical vulnerability. Like Mussolini, as illustrated in

the Italian misadventure in Ethiopia in the mid-1930s, the *Sanacja* regime regarded empire-building as the key to international stature.⁵⁶ Although no imperial opportunities were to be found, Nazi Germany's invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1938 presented the State with the chance to fulfil cynically some of its expansionist aims by retaking the Cieszyn (Tešín) frontier region (originally lost in 1920).

Another, though far less malignant, facet of state politics which echoed Fascist states and other European dictatorships in the inter-war period, was the four-year plan unveiled in March 1936. This highly centralist economic policy was formulated by the Minister of Finance, Eugeniusz Kwiatkowski, to develop state-owned industry, to cater for the needs of national defence and to invest in the national infrastructure.⁵⁷ This strategic programme of investment was centred on the development of the Central Industrial Region, a 'security triangle' between Cracow, Kielce and Łódź. Polish state sponsorship of architects and designers in the 1930s, bar rare exceptions such as the presidential residence in the Beskid mountains and despite the activities of 'progressive camps' like the proponents of Regionalism, often tended towards academism and Classicism in the 1930s. As Olgierd Czerner has noted, in the slow economic revival after 1934, the *Sanacja* regime favoured a number of monumental architectural schemes.⁵⁸ One such idea which was frequently returned to throughout the period was the replanning of the centre of Warsaw.

Following the death of Marshal Piłsudski in May 1935, the journal *Arkady* framed a black border around its editorial page obituary which mourned the passing of an 'age of nobility, heroism and beauty'.⁵⁹ In much the same spirit *Architektura i Budownictwo* dedicated a whole edition to the events of his life and funeral. The editorial, ascribed to the Association of Polish Architects (*Stowarzyszenie Architektów Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*) and the Society of Polish Planners (*Towarzystwo Urbanistów Polskich*), proposed developing a large swathe of Warsaw from the Mokotów Field to the centre of the city in dedication to the Marshal. They wrote: 'The symbol of the "Mokotów field" owes its initiation to the essential ideas of urban composition. The Mokotów field would be a new centre of collective life in the people's capital city.'⁶⁰ In the same edition, Stanisław Brukowski, a Modernist architect and member of Praesens, contributed an article entitled 'The Mokotów Field' (*Pole Mokotowskie*).⁶¹ Characterising this project as a Polish *Via dell'Impero*, he employed a language flattering to the State to air his rationalist vision of the redevelopment of this area of north Warsaw. Other projects illustrated in this journal in the following months paid more genuine homage to the dead leader. These designs were entries in a competition to design a major thoroughfare across the Vistula leading to a square in the centre of Warsaw to be called 'Marshal Józef Piłsudski Square' (*Plac Marszałka Józefa Piłsudskiego*).⁶² The range of schemes, even by



38 Hotel Patria designed by Bohdan Pniewski, Krynica, 1932–1934

architects with the most Modernist of practices, such as the project submitted by Stanisław Brukalski, Józef Szanajca and Bohdan Lachert, all displayed a sombre monumental character with stripped neoclassical buildings and typically climaxing in a vast square anchored by a leonine statue of Piłsudski. This scheme, as Tadeusz Przypkowski saw it, was a fitting tribute to a man whose name and work as a military leader had given Warsaw 'the character of a capital city of a great power'.⁶³

A tendency to monumentalism and Classicism had been a latent feature of Polish Modernism since the late 1920s. Bohdan Pniewski's Hotel Patria in Krynica built between 1932 and 1934, for example, despite its projected bay windows and metal balconies, contained a range of 'Greek' devices such as colonnades of pillars and clearly expressed socles. The trend to monumentalism was also found in other design fields; notably in public architectural ornament and decoration. The Central Railway Station in Warsaw, designed by Czesław Przybylski, provided major commissions for Józef Klukowski to design a number of bas-relief panels allegorising 'national' themes such as 'education', and for an enormous statue of Polonia lifting an eagle to be sculpted by Elwira and Jerzy Mazurczyk.⁶⁴

At the same time as this state-sponsored monumentalism rose to greater prominence, some sections of the Polish design press appear to have become increasingly enamoured with the achievements of Italian town planners, architects and interior designers.⁶⁵ These authors were not necessarily sympathetic with the political origins of much Italian design, but

they valued the sense of order and tradition that they found within it. Jerzy Munzer, in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, recognised the self-conscious way in which Italian architects drew upon their national inheritance: 'Modern Italy is motivated by its great claim and ambition to matchless national works of spirit, thought, skill and art, just as ancient Italian generations enriched humanity.'⁶⁶ But for Munzer this link with the past produced a powerful modern style, utilising contemporary building techniques and with clear 'rational' aspects. He illustrated his article selectively with Giuseppe Terragni's Casa del Fascio at Como of 1934, an intensely geometric, undecorated 'frame' of thin concrete supports and floors delivering bright rooms which were furnished with tubular metal furniture. Its classical character, derived from principles of geometry and monumentality, seemed to place this building in an Italian national tradition. Munzer, rather ominously, concluded his article by predicting the wide spread of this style.

The appeal of Italian design does not appear to have signified an open embrace of all Fascist design. N. Eskul, writing in *Arkady* in 1937, was less enthusiastic for state culture in Nazi Germany. He regarded the results of organised handicraft (presumably through the agency of the *Schönheit der Arbeit* office of Deutsche Arbeitsfront, though not acknowledged by the author as such) as artificial and affected when compared to Poland and Sweden, though he revealed his Cracow School attitudes in welcoming German vernacularism:

One should pay attention to the outflow of peasant furniture in Germany today. The penetration of folk forms into urban life, which in different cultures such as Poland and Sweden has followed a natural path, has not occurred in Germany, until recently. Only material reasons (such as the search for propriety) on one hand, and the theoretical recognition of folk art as the source of native culture on the other, brought the form of peasant furniture out from hiding into the town.⁶⁷

In the years immediately before the outbreak of the Second World War some design writers attempted to effect a strange 'relocation' of Polish material culture away from Teutonic and Slavic roots, a denial of the dominant themes in Polish design since Witkiewicz and his followers though true to a pattern of aversion which was characteristic to Polish culture.⁶⁸ What was implicit in Piotr Lubiński's 1937 'Grand Tour' from Poland to Italy, reported in the pages of *Arkady*⁶⁹, was made clear in a 1939 article by Jan Parandowski.⁷⁰ He stated, with hyperbole, 'Poland lies by the Mediterranean Sea' (*Polska leży nad Morzem Śródziemnym*), as a prelude to his essay which interpreted the history of Polish art, architecture and design as one constituted by classical characteristics. In this article, he sought to emphasise the Latinate elements within Polish culture, beginning with the roots of the Polish language. Implicit in Parandowski's highly tendentious essay was a political historicism which stressed the wealth of

Polish culture, the so called 'Golden Age', when it too was Latinate, as well as expressing an aversion to the Teutonic and Slavic cultures identifiable with Poland's avaricious neighbours.

The Polish Pavilion in Paris, 1937

The themes discussed thus far formed the conceptual and stylistic foundations of the Polish display at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne in Paris which opened in June 1937. Virtually all the designers discussed in this chapter were selected as exhibitors by the Exposition Commission led by Lech Niemojewski to represent Poland. Niemojewski, a professor of architecture and modern art history at the Warsaw Polytechnic, was a revealing choice for Commissioner. His early architectural practice: as the co-designer of workers' housing with Bohdan Lachert and Józef Szanajca; as an exhibitor at the First International Exhibition of Modern Architecture in Warsaw in 1926; and as the author of *Konstruktywizm w architekturze* (Constructivism in Architecture, 1932), the first study in Poland of its kind, gave him strong Modernist credentials. But, significantly, he was the author of another publication two years later, *Dwie szkoły polskiej architektury nowoczesnej* (Two Schools of Modern Polish Architecture, 1934) which surveyed the rise of both Modernist and the national style camps in Poland characterising them as the 'Warsaw School' and the 'Cracow School'. Niemojewski, in his subsequent official roles, such as a member of the panel directing the furnishing of the m/s *Piśsudski* in 1934, had encouraged the atmosphere of rapprochement that had fostered the revision of Modernist design of the 1930s. This pluralism also characterised the Polish display at the Paris exhibition. He contributed two essays to the Polish catalogue which expressed his accommodating view of the history of design in Poland in the early twentieth century.⁷¹

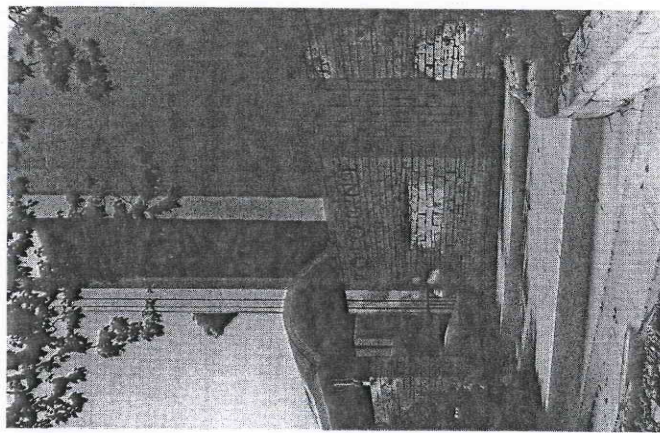
The national display, dispersed over fourteen sites in the city, was, naturally, extremely diverse; from postage stamps in the Pavillion Internationale in the Champs de Mars to publicity for the international airline, Lot, in the Pavillion de l'Aéronautique in the Quai d'Orsay (both of these examples were regarded as important cultural 'exports' and, as such, expressions of national merit). Such exhibits, in the international thematic pavilions and palaces of the Paris Exposition, faced direct competition for the attention of visitors from the items shown nearby by other nations, just as they did in international commerce. Whereas the Polish national pavilion in the Place de Varsovie, in contrast to these smaller displays, accorded the visitor a different set of impressions. The fifty architects, artists and designers involved in its realisation attempted to represent a more complex and abstract set of themes: notions of Polish domestic life; the values of the

State; and national history. Consequently, the following discussion concentrates on this pavilion at the expense of the other sites.

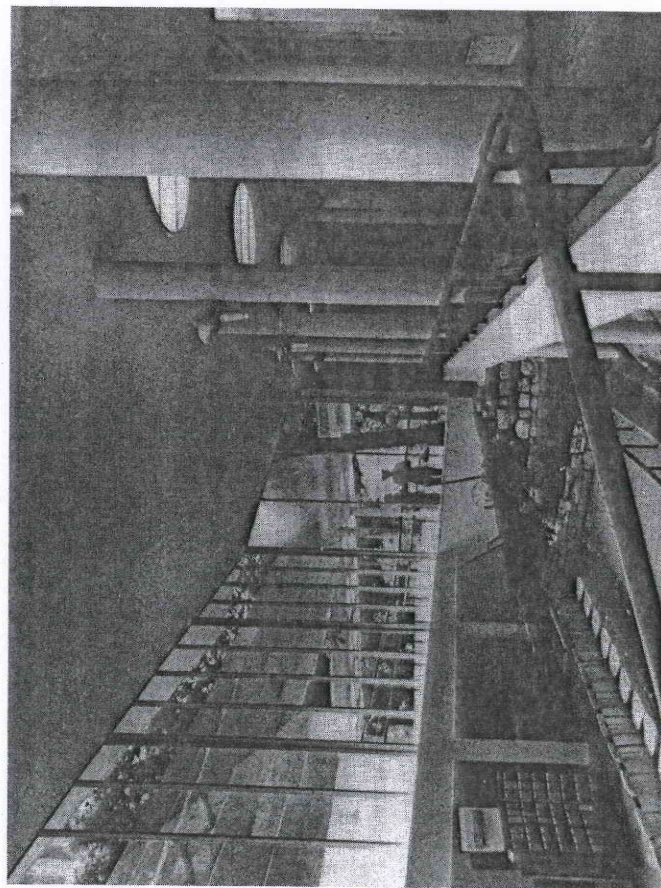
The Paris Exposition was assembled as Europe fell into antagonistic ranks that marched into world war. Spain was in the throes of a vicious civil conflict fuelled by Mussolini and Hitler's plans for a Fascist Europe. At the end of April 1937, a few weeks before the exhibition opened, Franco's nationalist forces bombarded the Basque town of Guernica. This act of brutality so enraged Pablo Picasso that he painted his remarkable indictment of war, *Guernica*, specifically for hanging at the exhibition. Against this background it is hardly startling that the organisers' optimistic aims to world unity and peace rang hollow.⁷² The antagonistically sited German and Soviet pavilions faced each other on either side of the avenue leading to the Trocadéro gardens like a grim metaphor for the state of Europe. These enormous piles in monumental Fascist and Socialist Realist variants of Classicism seemed to flaunt the exhibition requirements which sought to exclude historicism from this show dedicated to 'modern life'.⁷³ But many more pavilions conformed to French expectations: the Danes, Swedes, Dutch, Finns and other nations represented their national cultures in International Style buildings. The Poles also erected a Modernist pavilion designed by Bohdan Pniowski, Stanisław Brukowski, Józef Szanajca and Bohdan Lachert.⁷⁴ Despite the architectural correspondence between nations, these displays were not charged with the spirit of internationalism (like the exhibition itself which, a victim of the mood of Europe, failed to attract the attendance necessary to cover its enormous costs). Inspection beyond the white walls and the trim pilotis of the Polish pavilion reveals both inconsistencies, and the attempt to maintain 'national character', characteristic of the inter-war period.

The visitor to the tri-sectional Polish pavilion in the tree-filled gardens of the Trocadéro, after passing by a small wayside shrine (a typical feature of the Polish countryside), was ushered into the site through an arched portico. This passage was flanked by staunch bronze eagles and its ceiling displayed a strangely naïve classical fresco painted in garish colours and gold leaf by Bolesław Cybis. This led to a grand rotunda which was designed by Pniowski and Brukowski, both architects whose early Modern Movement style had evolved through the 1930s to incorporate classical elements. In form, it echoed the recently discovered oldest part of Wawel Castle in Cracow, the ancient seat of kings, and was faced with traditional rough stonework in white 'French' stone from Poland.⁷⁵ A legion of seven statues by eminent Polish sculptors of national leaders from Bolesław the Brave, the Christian king who united Poland in the tenth century, to Marshal Piłsudski, were positioned around the walls of the interior of this fourteen-metre-high cylinder. The walls of the rotunda were etched with an elegant inscription of the words spoken by the Marshal when the body of

39a Entrance to the Polish Pavilion at the Paris 1937 exhibition designed by Bohdan Pniewski and Stanisław Brukalski



39b The interior of the economic pavilion designed by Józef Szanajca and Bohdan Lachert at the Paris 1937 exhibition



Julian Słowacki, a nineteenth-century nationalist poet, was reburied at Wawel: 'There are men and acts so powerful that they can defeat death and continue to live among us.' The exit from this memorial to national tradition was covered with a canopy fixed by two iron lances. These weapons were symbolic of the romantic faith placed by Poland in her military history. Equally, hung like a tent and reminiscent of Sarmatian tradition, the fabric canopy was richly painted with the coats of arms of the ten royal families of Polish history. A writer in *Architectural Forum USA* noted the strange composite character of this rotunda: 'Even in the monumental entrance section of the Polish pavilion there is a curious contrast between the straightforwardness of the architectural forms and the nationalistic medieval character of the associated sculptural decoration.'⁷⁶

The visitor then took a short path through a garden filled with sculpture and a pond into the main building on the site. This narrow Modernist gallery was wedged into its site between an avenue and two trees. Its architects, Lachert and Szanajca, both veteran members of the Modern Movement, built in reinforced concrete, opening up the exhibition space with neat white columns and lit with a long wall of windows along its north-western face. The architects gave spatial expression to this long hall with a long flowing linear step. This room displayed the products of leading manufacturers such as the Milanowek silk producer and the Józef Fragnet foundry which produced Cracow School type metalware, and graphic displays by national bureaux such as the travel agency Orbis. After registering the advanced character of Polish commerce, the visitor could enjoy Polish cuisine in the restaurant which opened out into the garden.

Four exhibition interiors designed by architects flanked the south-eastern wall of the pavilion. The first of these projects warrants particular emphasis: Barbara Brukalska's living-room for an aeroplane designer marked a high in her career as a designer of Regionalist interiors. Achieved with native materials, it presented a domestic space formed out of tradition for a designer working in a romantically modern occupation. It was furnished with an organically shaped easy chair, covered in white sheepskin, that could be positioned as the sitter wished. Beside this stood a sofa made from laminated wood which was covered in calfskin. A small geometric table, made from white metal and glass, was placed in the middle of the room by a neat seat made from ash wood. The chimney formed a broad sandstone plane which gave a strong textural effect in contrast with an adjacent linoleum covered wall scored with a geometric diagram of the cross-section of an aeroplane wing by the painter Edward Manteuffel. The abstract woven rug designed by Wanda Kosecka lying on the floor was distinctly unlike those usually selected for Polish displays abroad which had always tended towards the 'folkish': though Brukalska summoned the vernacular in the ceramic vessels that she placed here which were produced

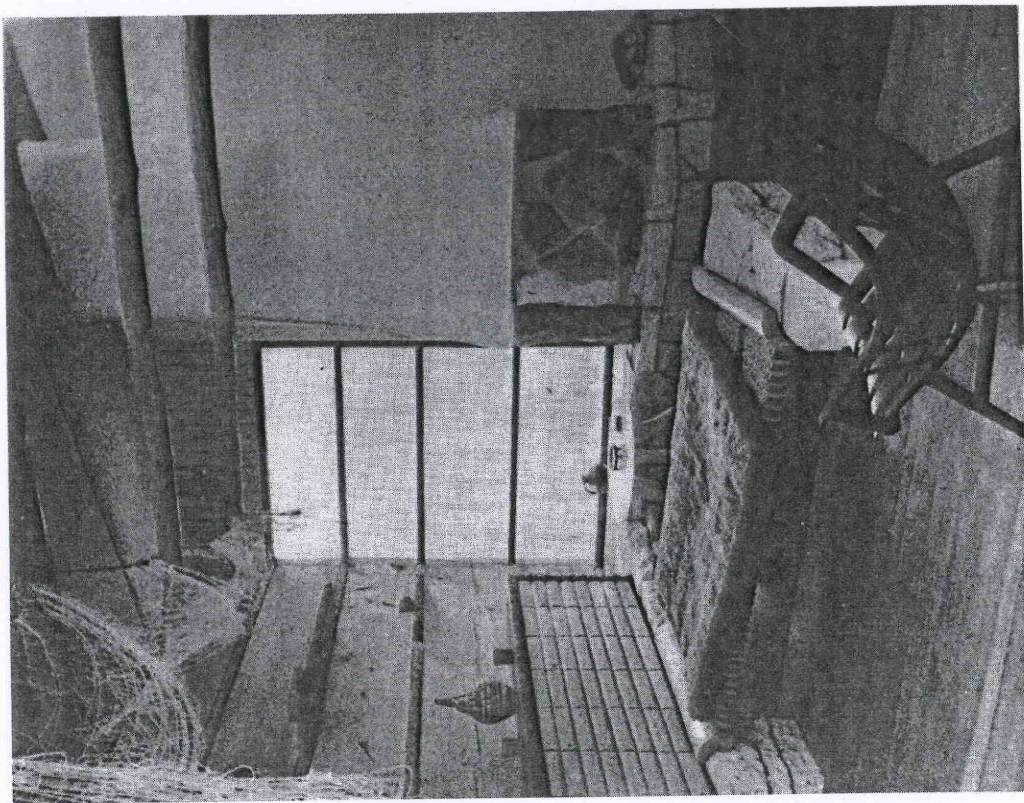
by the *Lad* co-operative. A writer in *The Architectural Review*, some months after the exhibition had closed, described Brukalska, on the basis of seeing this room, as one 'of the more sensitive architects' who had tempered the severity of modern architecture with her 'romantic' sensibility.⁷⁷ Konstanty Dańko and Jan Bogusławski presented an interior scheme, a weekend cottage retreat intended for sailing or fishing holidays, which also shared classic Regionalist characteristics in materials, construction and form. Similarly their room was ornamented with bright ceramics supplied by the Society for the Protection of Folk Art.

After inspecting these rooms the visitor could then walk past a series of photographic displays inviting a visit to the six regions designated as tourist areas, and then to an exhibition of books designed and illustrated by leading artists such as Adam Póttawski and Zofia Stryjeńska. Finally, the elevated easternmost corner of the gallery housed a small temple to Polish folk art designed by *Lad* member, Czesław Knothe, which housed carved religious statuary, art painted on glass, wood engravings, ceramic ovens, kilims and other woven fabrics. The organiser of this section, Anna Pawlikowska, explained that these exhibits had been included in an exhibition dedicated to 'modern life' because they continued to play an important role in Polish culture.⁷⁸ But it is interesting to note that inside this Modern Movement edifice, vernacular art and design, far from being banished as an anachronism from, to use Strzeмиński's phrase, 'the age of alphabets',⁷⁹ was accorded an important role within the display. Brukalska and Bogusławski had neatly illustrated Pawlikowska's argument by drawing upon vernacular arts and techniques to temper modern design. Folk art seemed no longer, at least in this respect, to be regarded as a reservoir of national style but as a complementary element of the modern interior.

The visitor was then directed out of the main pavilion, past a shop selling the domestic goods produced by the *Lad* co-operative, into the garden under a covered walkway made from concrete stamped with circular openings. It led across a small road which split the site to a smaller sub-pavilion dedicated to the Polish economy. This building was one of the most dynamic works of architecture in the entire exhibition. In plan, it spiralled upwards from a ground floor lecture theatre: thin white pilotis pierced through the first floor, a gallery of sharply staggered walls displaying charts of facts and figures about the still tardy national economy; an ingenious system of multi-panelled fenestration was angled to meet the sharply slanted roof. Szanajca and Lachert's Economic Pavilion was a striking, if delayed, example of the architectural plasticity so frequently discussed by Polish advocates of the Modern Movement and yet so rarely achieved.

This brief journey through the Polish national pavilion reveals it as the summation of many of the key themes in Polish design in the third decade

of the twentieth century. Contemporary observers, such as the correspondent of *The Architect and Building News*, saw the pavilion as a 'modern' edifice⁸⁰ (one Polish journalist writing in *Bluszcz* (Ivy) claimed proudly that at 'the congress of architects in Paris' (CIAM) there was 'near uniform expression of the opinion that at the Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques only the Polish pavilion is built in the spirit of modern architecture'⁸¹). But closer analysis of these three architectural structures and



40 Fisherman's retreat designed by Konstanty Dańko and Jan Bogusławski from the Polish Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition, 1937

their contents also shows their 'national' character. History, tradition, the vernacular, Modernism and monumentality were all employed to construct a multi-faceted national projection for the visitors to the Place de Varsovie in 1937. Individually, many Polish designers were awarded prizes and commendations for their works, and the architects of the Polish Pavilion received a Grand Prix for their 'especially interesting and successful architectural solutions'.⁸² Polish commentators too were pleased with their 'interesting and least banal' national display.⁸³ Although lacking stylistic coherence and with little claim to social or international ideals, this pavilion and its contents was a 'true' expression of a 'national international style'.

It would be capricious to suggest that the eclecticism of the Polish pavilion was simply a reflection of the tensions that modernity and independence had wrought on Polish society and the State. The International Style had, for example, been compromised in the Hungarian⁸⁴ and British pavilions also. The projection of Polishness in the Trocadéro gardens was a conscious attempt on the part of its organisers to reflect the diversity of material cultures and design practices in Poland. The contrast with the homogeneity of vision of the display orchestrated by Warchałowski and his colleagues twelve years earlier was striking. Niemcewicz, the General Commissioner in 1937, provided implicit explanation of this in his essay on the history of the Polish interior in the exhibition catalogue.⁸⁵ His chronicle turned on a number of oppositions: between 'artist-architects' and 'architect-engineers'; between 'creativity' and 'production' and between the Warsaw Polytechnic Faculty of Architecture tradition of design and that of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art; finding merits and demerits in both traditions. He challenged Taylorism and the 'Moloch' of mass production, fearing that the 'standardisation which already dominates countries with great industry' would flood Poland and absorb native culture. The Cracow School also came under fire for its retreat into the 'quiet arcadia of the academy' from the 'rhythm of modern life'. Niemcewicz's intention in both this essay and as the General Commissioner was not 'to take sides with one party' but to find territory for rapprochement. Taking the two main design schools in Warsaw as analogies for the two traditions he made a case for pluralism:

It seems evident, to all objective observers, that the two schools follow the same direction in realising, with accepted differences, those elementary principles of their art. The architects of the Academy place most importance on plastic values (...) whereas the architect-engineer studies with great care the use to which his project will be put. It seems that these two schools mutually complement each other and it is not through separate study of their individual characters that one can understand the art of decorating interiors in Poland today.⁸⁶

In the same way the Polish Pavilion, despite its Modernist dressing in the

International Style, was an attempt to reconcile both national issues and competing design ideologies.

Notes

- 1 M. Lacka, 'Kolo Artystów Grafików-Reklamowych' in Wojciechowski (ed.), *Polski życie artystyczne*, p. 612.
- 2 E. Wiskemann, *Europe of the Dictators 1919-1945*, Fontana, London, 1981, pp. 152-7.
- 3 Davies, *God's Playground*, II, pp. 411-15.
- 4 R. Miller, 'Narodziny nowego snoba' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 6, 1933, p. 165. It should also be noted that Miller's designs changed radically through the 1930s and by the middle years of the decade he was designing notable buildings, such as the Children's Hospital in Litewska St, Warsaw, that were stripped of ornamental detail and composed from geometric masses.
- 5 M.A.K. in *D.O.M.*, no. 8/9, 1938, p. 54, quoted in A. K. Olszewski, 'Les influences de Le Corbusier sur l'architecture Polonaise' in *Polish Art Studies*, VII, 1986, p. 91.
- 6 Schwarzenberg Czerny, 'Czy potrzebne ...?' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4, 1931, p. 163.
- 7 Schwarzenberg Czerny, 'Czy potrzebne ...?' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 4, 1931, p. 163.
- 8 C. Knothe interview with A. Panecka in *Projekt*, 5/80, no. 138, p. 32.
- 9 See catalogue to the *Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa Poznań*, Poznań, 1929, pp. 3-4.
- 10 Author not acknowledged, 'Ład spóldzielnia z odp. udziałami' in *Katalog Działu Sztuki PWK*, Poznań, 1929, p. 91.
- 11 C. Knothe interview with A. Panecka in *Projekt*, 5/80, no. 138, p. 32.
- 12 Though it should be noted that Praesens were able exhibit in the exhibition of fine art within the Palace of Art.
- 13 Olszewski, *Dzieje Sztuki Polskiej*, p. 66.
- 14 D. Wróblewska, 'From Tapestry to Woven Object' in *Projekt*, 2/80, pp. 60-1.
- 15 M. Sigmund in conversation in Cracow, October 1987.
- 16 J. Hryniewicz, 'Ład w IPSie' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 11, 1935, p. 338.
- 17 Jankowska-Orzyńska, 'Tkaniny Dekoracyjne' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 11/12, 1929, p. 77.
- 18 Unacknowledged author, 'Sztuka wnętrza i sztuka hafciarska w IPS-ie' in *Wiadomości Literackie*, no. 8, 23 February 1936, reprinted in M. Wallis, *Sztuka Polska Dwudziestolecia*, Arkady, Warsaw, 1959, p. 381.
- 19 Huml, *Polska Sztuka Stosowana*, p. 107.
- 20 I. Jakimowicz, *Formiści*, 1989, p. 61.
- 21 S. Świercz-Zalewski, 'Zameczek w Wiśle' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5/6, 1931, p. 171.
- 22 Author not acknowledged, 'Pierwszy krok w kierunku uwspółcześnienia wnętrza oficjalnych' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5/6, 1931, pp. 172-3.
- 23 W. Curtis, *Le Corbusier: ideas and forms*, Phaidon, Oxford, 1986, p. 109.
- 24 H. Hitchcock and P. Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, 1st ed. 1932 (reprinted by W.W. Norton, New York, 1966).
- 25 CIAM, 'Charter of Athens; tenets' (1933) in U. Contrads, *Programmes and manifestoes on 20th-century architecture*, Lund Humphries, London, 1970, pp. 137-45.
- 26 J. Goliński, 'Długa jeszcze droga do wnętrza jutra' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 3, 1936, p. 78.
- 27 P. M. Lubiński, 'Nowa Architektura Polska' in *Arkady*, 1938, quoted in Olszewski, 'Les influences de Le Corbusier ...' in *Polish Art Studies*, VII, 1986, p. 91.
- 28 Olszewski, 'Les influences de Le Corbusier ...' in *Polish Art Studies*, VII, 1986, p. 91.

- 29 A. Ryszkiewicz, 'Arkady' in Wojciechowski, *Polskie życie artystyczne*, pp. 670-2.
- 30 L., 'Łazienka' in *Arkady*, April 1936, p. 230.
- 31 Z. Skibniewski, 'Z mieszkań warszawskich' in *Arkady*, February 1937, pp. 106-7 and P.M.L., 'Z wnętrza warszawskich' in *Arkady*, November 1938, pp. 606-9.
- 32 Author not acknowledged, 'Z warszawskich mieszkań' in *Arkady*, no. 12, 1938, pp. 606-9.
- 33 T. Garbiniński in the exhibition catalogue quoted in T. Bober, 'Cele, program, realizacja wystawy' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1935, p. 152.
- 34 P.M. Lubiński, 'Wystawa Budowlano Mieszkaniowa BGK' in *Arkady*, July 1935, p. 140.
- 35 Z. Skibniewski, 'Wystawa budowlano-mieszkaniowa Banku Gospodarstwo Krajowego w dzielnicy Koto w Warszawie' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 5, 1935, p. 150.
- 36 Lubiński, 'Wystawa Budowlano Mieszkaniowa ...' in *Arkady*, July 1935, p. 142-3.
- 37 Lubiński, 'Wystawa Budowlano Mieszkaniowa ...' in *Arkady*, July 1935, p. 147-8.
- 38 The Studio published a survey of its designs in 1937 which listed its members; architects, Jan Bogusławski, Zofia Dziewulska, Stanisław Gałęzowski, Nina Jankowska, Stefan Kozłowski, Marek J. Leykam, Piotr M. Lubiński, Włodzimierz Padlewski, Władysław Pierkowski, Stanisław Potujan, Kazimierz Prószyński, Stefan Sienicki, Bolesław Szmidt, Józef Ufnalewski; and painter, Jan Kucharski. See M. J. Leykam (ed.), *Meble Wnętrz Mieszkalnych*, Wyd. Zakładu Architektury Polskiej i Historii Sztuki Politechniki Warszawskiej, Warsaw, 1937.
- 39 S. Sienicki, 'Normy w meblarstwie' in *Arkady*, June 1935, pp. 108-11.
- 40 The market for domestic architecture in Poland in the 1930s was very weak, like the national economy itself. In February 1932, Modernist architects, through their professional body, the Society of Polish Architects, tried to persuade the state to 'nationalise' architectural practice by organising enormous state offices employing up to 500 architects to design housing estates and plan cities. See Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 90.
- 41 O. Sosnowski, 'Przedmowa' to Leykam, *Meble Wnętrz Mieszkalnych*, pp. 7-8.
- 42 See *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 3, 1936 for: M. Leykam, 'Kompozycja wnętrza', pp. 73-4; K. Prószyński, 'Poszukiwanie definicji', pp. 75-6; J. Goliński, 'Długa jeszcze droga do wnętrza jutra', pp. 76-9; & B. Szmidt, '"Funkcjonalne" wnętrza', pp. 79-80.
- 43 Sienicki had, in fact, been awarded fourth prize in the 1928 competition for a series of restrained classical interior schemes and rather pragmatic designs for standardised office furniture.
- 44 Z. Skibniewski, 'Architektura Wnętrz uwagi o wystawie w Instytucie Propagandy Sztuki' in *Arkady*, April 1937, p. 236.
- 45 Skibniewski, 'Architektura Wnętrz ...' in *Arkady*, April 1937, pp. 233-44.
- 46 S. Sienicki, 'Ostatnie słowo' in *Arkady*, June 1937, p. 318-19.
- 47 Sienicki, 'Ostatnie słowo' in *Arkady*, June 1937, p. 318.
- 48 F. MacCarthy, *A History of British Design*, George Allen and Unwin, London, 1979, p. 56.
- 49 Politically the State actively sought close contact and alliances with its northern neighbours in the inter-war period. See J.M. Rose, *Poland*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1939, pp. 86-7. Culturally, the Society for the Promotion of Polish Art Abroad was keen to send exhibitions of Polish decorative art to Scandinavia. See J. Pollakówna, 'Towarzystwo Szerzenia Sztuki Polskiej Wśród Obcych' in Wojciechowski, *Polskie życie artystyczne*, p. 551.
- 50 P. Siwik, 'Tuberkuloosi Parantola' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, August 1933, p. 288.
- 51 T. Berlinerblau, 'Osiedla pod Sztokholmem' in *Arkady*, April 1937, pp. 194-6.
- 52 P. Lubiński, 'Dobry meble' in *Arkady*, June 1938, pp. 201-5.
- 53 Olszewski, 'Les influences de Le Corbusier ...' in *Polish Art Studies*, VII, 1986, p. 91.

- 54 Davies, *God's Playground*, II, p. 404.
- 55 Leslie, *The History of Poland*, p. 144.
- 56 Rose, *Poland*, p. 234. This issue was also raised in the *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonoise à l'Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, Warsaw, 1937, p. 179: 'Poland, being deprived of colonies, is obliged to meet all the needs of its population on its own territory.'
- 57 Rose, *Poland*, p. 196.
- 58 O. Czerner, 'In Search of New Content and Form' in Czerner and Listowski, *Avant-Garde Polonoise*, p. 93.
- 59 'Editorial' in *Arkady*, June 1935.
- 60 Author not acknowledged, 'Editorial' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 2, 1935, p. 1.
- 61 The Mokotów Field was a relatively undeveloped area of the city which used for sports and leisure. S. Brukowski, 'Pole Mokotowskie' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 2, 1935, p. 42.
- 62 *Architektura i Budownictwo*, March/April, 1935, p. 85, and September, 1935, p. 145.
- 63 Dr T. Przykowski, *Warszawa*, Warsaw, 1936, p. 18.
- 64 To my knowledge these projects were never completed.
- 65 P.M. Lubiński, 'Pocztówka z Neapolu' in *Arkady*, no. 3, 1937, pp. 148-50; P. Biegański, 'Architektura Włoch Mussoliniego' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 10, 1937, p. 367; J. Munzer, 'Tradycja i racjonalizm w dzisiejszej architekturze Italii' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 11/12, 1938, pp. 383-92.
- 66 Munzer, 'Tradycja i racjonalizm ...' in *Architektura i Budownictwo*, no. 11/12, p. 383.
- 67 N. Eskul, 'O nowy styl w niemieckim meblarstwie' in *Arkady*, August 1937, p. 431.
- 68 I am indebted to J. A. Mrozek, Principal Lecturer in the History of Design at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Art, for suggesting this point to me in October 1989.
- 69 P.M. Lubiński, 'Pocztówka z Neapolu' in *Arkady*, March 1937, p. 148.
- 70 J. Parandowski, 'Polska leży nad Morzem Śródziemnym' in *Arkady* no. 3, V, March 1939, pp. 113-16.
- 71 L. Niemojewski, 'L'Architecture Contemporaine en Pologne' and 'Décoration d'Intérieurs en Pologne' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonoise*, 1937, pp. 251-9, and pp. 260-8.
- 72 Y. Delbos, 'The Exposition - A Message of Peace' in *Paris 1937*, 1937, p. 4.
- 73 Greenhalgh, *Ephemeral Vistas*, p. 160.
- 74 The following description of the pavilion and its exhibits is largely drawn from *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonoise*, 1937.
- 75 The Rotunda of the Virgin was discovered in Wawel Castle in the inter-war period by Adolf Szyzsko-Bohusz. It dates from the tenth century.
- 76 Review of the Polish Pavilion in *Architectural Forum USA* reprinted in R. Soltyński, *Glimpses of Polish Architecture*, Maxlove Publishing Co., London, undated (published during the Second World War), p. 55.
- 77 C. Entwistle, 'An approach to Modern Design' in *The Architectural Review*, December 1937, p. 228.
- 78 A. Pawlikowska, 'L'Art Populaire Polonoise' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonoise*, 1937, p. A48.
- 79 W. Strzemiński, 'O sztuce ludowej' in *Forma* 1, 1933, p. 14.
- 80 Author not acknowledged, 'The Polish Pavilion at the Paris Exhibition' in *The Architect and Building News*, 3 September 1937, pp. 285-7.
- 81 Author not acknowledged, *Bluszcz*, no. 31, 1937, pp. 6-11, quoted in Wojciechowski, *Polskie życie artystyczne*, 1974, p. 394.
- 82 Author not acknowledged, *Komunikaty Stowarzyszenia Architektów Polskich*, no. 1, 1938, pp. 9-10.
- 83 Z. Skibniewski, 'Uwagi o architekturze wystawy w Paryżu 1937' in *Arkady*, November/

December, 1937, p. 576.

84 *La Hongrie a l'Exposition Internationale de Paris 1937*, (cat. to the Hungarian pavilion), Pallas, Budapest, 1937.

85 Niemojewski, 'Décoration d'Intérieurs en Pologne' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonaise*, 1937, pp. 260-8.

86 Niemojewski, 'Décoration d'Intérieurs en Pologne' in *Catalogue Officiel de la Section Polonaise*, 1937, p. 268.

7

Conclusion

The nation is formed out of the spirit, out of the will, of freedom, whereas the state is formed out of the body or rather the external things of this world, from slavery.

Cyprian Norwid

The Polish language possesses two words without direct equivalent in English that are relevant here; *polskość* and *swojskość*. The notion of *polskość* is given the dictionary definition of 'Polish characteristics (traits, nationality, origin)',¹ but beyond this somewhat anodyne translation, it signifies the notion, as Jerzy Jedlicki has asserted, that there can be a Polish essence in people, concepts and things.² Jerzy Warchałowski, a leading figure amongst many other commentators, believed that his Cracow School colleagues had captured and expressed *polskość* in the applied arts and design; 'the best expression of national identity'.³ But with historical retrospection, the promotion of the Zakopane Style and the rise of the Cracow School from the turn of the century echoed a characteristic and central course of development in the applied arts across Europe between 1890 and 1930. Many architects whose careers were synonymous with the Modern Movement began their careers within the embrace of the vernacular revival, as Walter Gropius's Metzner House in Dramburg of 1905-06 testifies.⁴ Furthermore, the history of the Cracow School suggests that interest in vernacular concerns were not closed by the intellectual wave of Modernism that washed over Europe in the 1920s nor by the neoclassicism of the 1930s, and might prompt the reader to consider to what degree the Polish experience of vernacularism was unique. 'Heroic' Modernism has dominated the recording of the history of design, yet many other histories are still to be written.

Each moment in the pre-history and history of the Cracow school has its European equivalents in terms of shared formal characteristics apparently undermining Warchałowski's claims to *polskość*. If one reviews the 'rediscovery' of vernacular housing types across Central Europe by, for example, studying Hermann Muthesius's *Landhaus und Garten* (Munich, 1907), it is easy to find many buildings which correspond with Witkiewicz's Zakopane Style: or surveys the output of the Gödöllő workshops, founded just outside Budapest in 1902 by the painter Aladár Körösfői-Kriesch,⁵ one finds similarities with the fabrics produced by the Cracow Workshops.

What remains, in terms of marked 'Polishness', as I have stressed through the course of this study, was usually determined by the material conditions and political constraints of Poland as an ideal and as nation-state.

For the Cracow School, the fount of *poliskość* was the peasantry (*lud*) rather than the people or nation (*naród*). They, it was believed, possessed an engrammatic memory of *poliskość* in their vernacular material culture. Just as Witkiewicz looked to the native carving skills of *Górale* craftsmen in the 1890s, *Lad's* textile designers toured Poland in the 1930s to record regional weaving patterns. This vernacularist ideology was sustained by both national and international intellectual seams which only began to be significantly eroded in Poland from the years of national independence after 1918. However much Poland was celebrated as a patriotic ideal with ideologies of messianism, i.e. the 'second coming' of the Polish State, or Organic Work during the years of partition, it was never an isolated cloister. Receptive to influence from the rest of Europe, Polish intellectuals found repeatedly national application and national values in ideas and themes which had been circling throughout Europe during the course of the nineteenth century. The fusion of Arts and Crafts ideals with the intelligentsia's affair with the peasantry from the 1890s is a prime example of the 'nationalisation' of pan-European intellectual currents within Polish culture and is fundamental to this study. In 1911 and 1912, for example, *The Studio* published two volumes of cursory ethnography mapping 'peasant art' from Russia and Austro-Hungary which included studies of the Polish peasantry living as subjects of those empires.⁶ The Polish material in the first volume was supplied by three stalwarts of the Zakopane Style and the Cracow School: Stanisław Barabasz, then Director of the Zakopane School of Wood Industry; M. Nikorowicz, Director of the Tatra Museum; and Seweryn Udziela of the TPSS. The text dealing with Galician vernacular culture echoed a number of Ruskinian themes and Arts and Crafts-inspired concepts. The 'pierced wood carving' applied by the peasants to their homes in the Zakopane region was warmly applauded for its uniqueness, 'no two designs being alike'.⁷ This was a people unalienated by the social and technological revolution of modernity, a fact reflected in the qualities of the things that they made: 'how deep the love of the beautiful is engraved in these simple Polish peasants of the south'.⁸ The patriotic ideology of the Polish vernacularists was unequivocally compatible with the supra-national theses of the Arts and Crafts. Consequently, the fortunes of Warchałowski and his national style conspirators, although prolonged by their adoption as the 'State style' in the first few years of the 1920s, were linked to the vitality of the Arts and Crafts throughout Europe. But as new themes gained momentum, such as the debates initiated by the Deutscher Werkbund concerning industrial production and standardisation before the First World War,⁹ and in Poland after 1918 with the early stirring of

Modernism, Arts and Crafts practice became increasingly unsustainable in a world powered by industry and revolutionary social change.

In addition to *poliskość*, a second word '*swojskość*' which might be best translated as 'one's own-ness', is relevant to this conclusion. As an expression of patriotism, the vernacularist design philosophy of the Cracow School achieved its greatest success when, seeking to promote their vision of *poliskość*, they reminded the Poles of Poland. They, in collusion with painters, writers and other artists, had constructed a patriotic language of symbols in design that invoked a living history, an uncontaminated Poland: another example of one of the many ideals which developed in the paradoxical poetic 'freedom' from the realpolitik of statehood of the partitions. But a language that speaks of Poland to Poles may be unintelligible to the rest of the world, and the designs of the Cracow School were a distinguished example of this kind of *swojskość*. The Polish display at the International Exposition in Paris in 1925 was undoubtedly a great success for its participants. But it seems appropriate, in the light of the fate of the Cracow School in the following years, to stress that this was a late glow of the embers of vernacularist design. The display was born before Modernism had achieved its near hegemony over design practice: it was the offspring of the Cracow School's relations with state culture. The themes it championed continued to live into the 1930s by virtue of that kinship, much to the disappointment to the opponents of what they regarded to be Polish parochialism. Furthermore, when the Cracow School displayed its 'national style' abroad it was usually 'misunderstood'.

The 1920s and the 1930s witnessed, as we have seen, the ascendancy of Modernist and classical languages of design in a restored Poland shackled by the 'freedoms' of independence. They came to represent 'national', i.e. orthodox state, 'values' to both the Poles and to people abroad. Poland, a country retarded by underdevelopment, ethnic tensions and the vicious trade cycles of the age, fought to sustain a nation schooled by traditions which swung between national fatalism and inflated self-regard. Internationally, caught in the voracious gaze of her neighbours in the west and east, she sought to appear dynamic in an age which defined national virility in terms of technological advance, commerce and forceful foreign policy. In the light of these conditions, as well as the compulsive advance of industry, vernacularism was inevitably condemned as parochial. Classicism and Modernism (and sometimes both in convergence), in contrast, had currency in the body-building contest of international profile of the 1930s. Both were internationalist styles that were deployed in Poland to represent, seemingly paradoxically, national vigour. It is interesting to note that, for a number of reasons, Classicism in design had been relatively absent during the last years of the partitions (with some interesting exceptions¹⁰): the appeal of Beidermeier, for example, itself a form of a vernacular-

Journals

Detailed references to particular articles can be found in the footnotes. The following journals are of interest to those researching the history of art and design in Poland:

- Architektura i Budownictwo* (1925 - 39)
- Arkady* (1935-39)
- Blok* (1924-25)
- Forma* (1933-38)
- L'Art Contemporain / Sztuka Współczesna* (1929-30)
- Materiały Polska Sztuka Stosowana* (1902-12)
- Præsens* (1926 and 1930)
- Projekt* (1956-today)
- Polish Art Studies* (1980-today)
- Polska Sztuka Ludowa* (1946-today)
- Przemysł i Rzemiosło* (1921)
- Przemysł, Rzemiosło, Sztuka* (1922-24)
- Rzeczy Piękne* (1918-19, and 1925-32)
- Wzory Mebli* (1927-30)

Books and exhibition catalogues

Abbreviations

- I.W.P. - Instytut Wzornictwa Przemysłowego.
- K.A.W. - Krajowa Agencja Wydawnicza.
- M.W.R.i.O.P. - Ministerstwo Wyższej Religijnych i Oświecenia Publicznego.
- P.A.N. - Polska Akademia Nauk.
- Wyd. Lit. - Wydawnictwo Literackie.
- W.A.G. - Wydawnictwo Artystyczno-Graficzne.
- Anders, H., *Rytm - w poszukiwaniu stylu narodowego*, Arkady, Warsaw, 1972.
- Ascherson, N., *The Struggles for Poland*, Michael Joseph, London, 1986.
- Barabasz, S., *Sztuka Ludowa na Podhalu*, I - III, Lwów / Warsaw, 1930.
- Beiersdorf, Z., and Purchla, J., *Dom pod globusem*, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1988.
- Berlewi, H., *Funktionelle Grafik der zwanziger Jahre in Polen* (special edition of *New Graphic Design*, no. 9), Otto Walker Olten, Switzerland, 1961.
- Bieniarzówna, J., and Matecki, J. M., *Dzieje Krakowa*, III, Wyd. Lit., Cracow, 1979.
- Bojko, S., *Polska Sztuka Plakatu*, W.A.G., Warsaw, 1971.
- Bromke, A., *The Meaning and Uses of Polish History*, East European Monographs, Boulder, 1987.
- Cambridge, Kettle's Yard Gallery, 'Constructivism in Poland 1923-1926', (exhibition cat. edited by Hilary Gresty and Jeremy Lewison), date unacknowledged (c. 1986).
- Chrzanowski, Z., *Sztuka i Rzemiosło*, part 4, Nakładem Kursów Zawodowego Wykształcenia Słusarzy przy Muzeum Rzemiosł i Sztuki Stosowanej, Warsaw, 1912.

Notes

- 1 *Podręczny Słownik Polsko-Angielski*, Warsaw, 1986.
- 2 Jerzy Jedlicki, 'Holy ideals and prosaic life, or the Devil's alternatives' in Gomulka and Polonsky, *Polish Paradoxes*, p. 41.
- 3 J. Warchałowski, 'Polska Sztuka Dekoracyjna', 1927, quoted in M. Padechowicz, 'Prace konkursowe na urządzenie gmachu' in *Wzory Mebli*, no. 8, 1928, p. 1.
- 4 R. Isaacs, *Walter Gropius*, Bullfinch Press, Boston, 1991, p. 14.
- 5 J. Szabadi, *Art Nouveau in Hungary*, Kossuth, Budapest, 1989, pp. 81-94.
- 6 C. Holme (ed.), *Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary*, The Studio, London, 1911, and C. Holme (ed.) *Peasant Art in Russia*, The Studio, London, 1912.
- 7 A. S. Levetus, 'Austria' in Holme, *Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary*, p. 4.
- 8 Levetus, 'Austria' in Holme, *Peasant Art in Austria and Hungary*, p. 12.
- 9 R. Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, The Architectural Press, London, 1982, pp. 68 - 78.
- 10 Stanisław Wyspiański also presents one extremely interesting example that demands complete study in its own right: his project of the early 1900s to rebuild Wawel Castle in Cracow as a Polish 'Acropolis'. See J. Krawczyk, 'L'Architecture parlante de Wyspiański et son sens messianique' in *Polish Art Studies*, VII, 1986, pp. 65-82.
- 11 Central Komitet Obywatelski, *Odbudowa Wsi Polskiej: projekty zagrod włościańskich*, Gebethner i Wolff, Warsaw, 1915, reprinted by Abrys, Warsaw, 1991.

lar Classicism, notable across central Europe in the first decade of the century, took the form of a revival of the Polish manor house (*Dwór*). Significantly complementing the Polish Arts and Crafts Movement, this included the promotion of *Dwór*-style details and plans for domestic and peasant housing types in the last years before the outbreak of the First World War.¹¹ This domestic housing type had architectural appeal for its historical and national associations as the homes of the *Szlachta* from the Golden Ages of Polish history: this homespun Classicism was very distant from the brawny monumentalism of Peter Behren's German embassy in St Petersburg of 1911-12: it spoke of Polish things.

The languages of design in the period spanned by this study need to be 'read' in the light of a number of contexts: but crucially the study of this history must be made with the knowledge that the contemporary 'audience' for these buildings and objects was transformed by the return of Poland in 1918. In the first third of the twentieth century, albeit years which had seen some of the most momentous events in Polish history, both the vernacular and the 'international styles' of the 1930s had been summoned to represent 'Polishness'. But crucially, and following Cyprian Norwid's words at the head of this conclusion, the roots of this succession lay as much in the radically changed meaning of 'Poland', as design.

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