

Young Poland: The Polish Arts and Crafts Movement 1890-1918

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This illustrated collection seeks to reposition the Young Poland movement in the context of the international Arts and Crafts movement, rather than continuing to situate Young Poland in the context of European Art Nouveau. Published ahead of an accompanying exhibition at the William Morris Gallery in London, the editors' introduction highlights ideas shared between the British Arts and Crafts movement and Young Poland. Similarities can be seen in their interest in folk traditions, inspiration from local flora and desire to eliminate the boundary between high and low art. The collection shifts focus from the role of painting to applied arts in Young Poland, incorporating contributions about less-well known artists' work.

While drawing comparisons with the British Arts and Crafts movement, the collection *Young Poland* also acknowledges the turn inward in the works of many Young Poland artists as they reflected on the desire for national independence. The collection focuses on the period 1890 – 1918, when Poland was partitioned by the Prussian, Russian and Habsburg Empires. Many artists of the movement were interested in folk traditions and local flora as inspiration for creating a uniquely Polish national style during the time of partition. The collection demonstrates that although Young Poland shared similar objectives and social values with the British Arts and Crafts movement, the artists of Young Poland also had ideas that were specific to the Polish context.

The collection is divided into two parts. The first includes chapters about some of the most famous individuals associated with the Young Poland movement, in particular Stanisław Witkiewicz and Stanisław Wyspiański. The themes of folk culture and the boundaries between high and low art are perhaps most evident in discussions about their work. Witkiewicz, inspired by the wood carving and folk motifs of the Highlander people (Górale), pioneered Zakopane style with the building of the 1896-7 'House under the Firs'. Wyspiański, an artist and playwright, produced paintings, designs and even a decorative scheme for the Franciscan Church in Kraków, detailed in Laskowska's chapter. Several essays about Wyspiański's work

consider the influence of his reflections on debates about national independence. Griffin explores points of comparison in the lives of Wyspiański and Morris, counterposing Wyspiański's 'Pansies' design (1897), the cover image of the collection, with Morris' 'Trellis' wallpaper design (1864) to visually underscore the ideas shared between artists of Young Poland and the British Arts and Crafts movement.

The collection benefits from the inclusion of chapters focused on until now lesser-known artists, such as contributions by Barucka and Griffin about Karol Kłosowski, an expert in the peasant tradition of decorative paper cuttings, and by Bogoczek and Howard about the art of Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, a poet and painter. Although Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska left Poland during the Second World War and settled in England, where she is buried in Manchester, her work has until recently been little known in the UK. Inglesby's chapter on the Kraków Workshops provides an insight into the educational impulses within the movement through training in the batik workshops, linking back to the discussion of social values shared with the British Arts and Crafts movement.

The second part of the book is devoted to the applied arts, such as furniture design, interior design, textiles, bookbinding, ceramics, toys and painting. The proliferation of illustrative photographs with accompanying, detailed comments allows for a close analysis of individual objects and offers the reader the opportunity to see how the ideas of the Young Poland movement were realised through the applied arts. The chapter about toys and paper Christmas tree decorations offers notable examples of the influence of folk culture and local legends, such as the Wawel dragon, as well as exploring the pedagogical function of the workshops.

Young Poland provides background on the key ideas of the movement, as well as zooming in on particular paintings, objects and designs for closer analysis. It draws fruitful comparisons between Young Poland and the British Arts and Crafts movement, while also acknowledging the unique Polish context in which many artists were thinking about national independence at a time when the country remained partitioned. The book is the result of a research project co-financed by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage and is a collaborative project between Lund Humphries, the William Morris Gallery, the National Museum in Kraków and the Polish Cultural Institute, London.