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Edward Trojanowski: The Search for Style in Early 20th-century Furniture Design in Poland

Three sources of inspiration are discernible in early 20th-century Polish furniture design and especially in the output of artist-designers associated with the Polish Applied Art Association (Towarzystwo Polska Sztuka Stosowana, henceforward: TPSS), namely, folk art, the historical styles, and the modernistic/geometrical current.¹ Edward Trojanowski's oeuvre in that area combines all these three tendencies and embodies the evolution of Polish approach to designing furniture; hence it may serve to illustrate the history of Polish furniture design in the early 20th century.

Trojanowski was born in the year 1873 in Koło. In the period 1892–1897 he studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, for the first two years as a non-enrolled student. He attended, among others, courses in the composition of historical and battle scenes, and one in nature study. In the autumn of 1897 he left for Munich, and from there for Paris, where he studied at the Académie Julian under the supervision of Jean-Paul Laurens. In 1898 he travelled in Italy. From 1900 onwards he lived in Cracow, where he soon joined the current of artistic life; he became a member of the “Sztuka” Association of Polish Artists, from 1901 he taught at the private School of Decorative Art directed by Jan Bukowski and Włodzimierz Tetmajer. In 1905 he moved to Warsaw, where he taught applied art (1906–1920) and decorative painting (1922–1930) at the School of Fine Arts. Concurrently he was the art director of Wierzbicki Printing Press and Lithographic Studio. He exhibited his works at the Association of the Friends of Fine Arts in Cracow and the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw, as well as abroad; the display of his

1 A. Kostrzyńska-Miłosz, *Polskie meble 1918–1939. Forma – funkcja – technika* [Polish furniture 1918–1939. Form – function – technology], Warsaw, 2005, pp. 25–32. The article was written in the framework of the “The Fathers of Polish Design. Polish Applied Art Association. Interior architecture and furniture design” research project, financed by the National Science Centre (2015/17/D/HS2/01215).

works at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925 was a considerable success. He died on 22 May 1930 in Warsaw.²

Trojanowski's output is very varied. He painted cityscapes in oil (e.g. *The Planty Park in Cracow*, 1902, National Museum in Warsaw), produced lithographs (e.g. *Wawel*, 1903, National Museum in Warsaw), designed wall paintings and stained glass windows (wall paintings and the altar in the church in Małkinia, wall paintings in the chapel in Gostynin, stained glass windows in the church in Lubraniec, design for a stained glass window in the Szafraniec Chapel on Wawel Hill)³.

Together with Jerzy Warchałowski, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, Karol Tichy, Józef Czajkowski and Stanisław Goliński, Trojanowski belongs to the circle of the founders of the Polish Applied Art Association, instituted on 8 June 1901 in Cracow.⁴ Later, he was a member of the Association's Temporary Committee, and then its Subdivision, Industrial Section and Research Section.⁵ Together with Warchałowski, he edited the first nine issues of *Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej. Materiały* [TPSS Publishing House. Materials]. He was also involved in the organisation of the Association's exhibitions in Cracow (1902), Warsaw (1902), the Printing Exhibition in Cracow (1904) and the later exhibition in Warsaw (1908)⁶.

After the year 1901 Trojanowski focused on applied art. He was a successful graphic designer. He designed the covers for two issues of *Materiały* for the TPSS (no. 1, 6), the membership card for the year 1902/03, postcards, posters for the Printing Exhibition in Cracow (1904) and the Exhibition of Modern Fabrics and Ceramics, also in Cracow (1905), the cover for the Printing Exhibition catalogue and some of its decoration. He designed covers for books and volumes of poetry,⁷ as well as exhibition posters and commercial bills.⁸ He participated in graphic design contests; in 1905 he won the first prize at the TPSS contest for the logo for the

2 L. Skalska-Miecik, *Polscy uczniowie Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu w XIX i na początku XX wieku. Katalog wystawy* [Polish students of the Fine Arts Academy in St. Petersburg in the 19th and early 20th century. Exhibition catalogue], Warsaw, 1989, p. 157.

3 Association of the Friends of Fine Arts Archive, materials pertaining to Edward Trojanowski.

4 *Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1901–02* [Report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1901–02], Cracow, 1903, p. 3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 18; *III. Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1904* [3rd report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1904], Cracow 1905, s. 13; *VII. sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie R.1908* [7th report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1908], Cracow, 1909, p. 5.

7 Book cover designs for, e.g., J. Lemański, *Proza ironiczna* [Ironic prose], Warsaw, 1904; S. Żeromski, *Szyfowe prace* [Labours of Sisyphus], Lvov, 1905; G. Daniłowki, *Na wyspie* [On an island], Warsaw 1907; J. Lemański, *Noc i dzień* [Night and day], Warsaw, 1910.

8 Posters for, e.g., Wilhelm Lipschitz's wine shop (1904), General Bookshop in Lvov, Jan Stanisławski's posthumous exhibition in Zachęta (1907), exhibition of the "Złoty Róg" Association (1911), exhibition of the "Sztuka" Association of Polish Artists in Zachęta (1912), the *Village and Small Town* exhibition of Polish architecture (1915), *Poland in Pictures* photographic exhibition (1916).

Gebethner & Wolff publishing house.⁹ He presented his prints at the TPSS exhibition in Warsaw in 1902,¹⁰ at the *Printing Exhibition*¹¹ and the Association's exhibition in Warsaw in 1908.¹²

In addition, Trojanowski designed kilims, produced by the firms of Włodzimierz Pohlman in Lipnica, Antonina Sikorska in Czernichów and Konstancja Lipkowska in Nowy Sącz. They were shown at exhibitions in Warsaw in 1902,¹³ in Cracow in 1903¹⁴ and 1905,¹⁵ as well as at the Austrian exhibition in London in 1906.¹⁶ Trojanowski undertook to design a very broad range of artistic craft objects. In 1903 he won a design contest for a net curtain for Szlekier, Wydźga & Weyer in Warsaw.¹⁷ In 1902, at the TPSS shows in Cracow and Warsaw, he exhibited "small chest painted in folk motifs", a "screen made in the appliquéd broadcloth technique" and "leather sleeves for books".¹⁸

Furniture design and interior design were among the more important areas of Trojanowski's activity. He frequently exhibited designs for furniture and interiors, as well as finished projects, at exhibitions or entered them into contests. His design for bedroom furniture was exhibited at the TPSS show in Cracow in 1902.¹⁹ Still in the same year the Warsaw public saw some more of his designs: for dining room furniture, for wicker furniture, as well as a wall decoration and a shelf for a children's room made in the Cracow workshop of Józef Zabrza.²⁰ Unfortunately the Warsaw press failed to comment on these designs; but Trojanowski's works awarded, also

9 *IV. Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana w Krakowie r. 1905* [4th report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1905], Cracow, 1906, p. 8.

10 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej* [Catalogue of the 2nd exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow], Warsaw, 1902, pp. 41, 43.

11 *Wystawa drukarska urządzona staraniem Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w dawnym pałacu hr. Czapskich w Krakowie od 24 grudnia 1904 do 10 lutego 1905 r.* [Printing exhibition organised by the Polish Applied Art Association at the former Count Czapski Palace in Cracow from 24 Dec. 1904 to 10 Feb. 1905], Cracow, 1904, pp. 48, 49, 60.

12 *Wystawa krakowskiego Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w gmachu Towarzystwa Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie luty 1908 r.* [Exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow held at the "Zachęta" Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts edifice in Warsaw, Feb. 1908], Cracow, 1908, p. 18.

13 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 39.

14 *Katalog VII. wystawy Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich „Sztuka” i II. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”* [Catalogue of the 7th exhibition of the "Sztuka" Association of Polish Artists and 2nd exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], Cracow, 1903, p. 26.

15 *Katalog nowożytnych tkanin i wyrobów ceramicznych* [Catalogue of modern fabrics and pottery], Cracow, 1905, p. 49.

16 *Imperial-Royal Austrian Exhibition London, Earls Court 1906*, London, 1906, p. 51.

17 *II. sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1903* [2nd report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1903], Cracow, 1904, p. 9.

18 *Katalog I. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”* [Catalogue of the 1st exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], Cracow 1902, pp. 29, 30; *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 41.

19 *Katalog I. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”...*, p. 29.

20 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 37.

in 1902, at the Zachęta contest for the design of a house and furniture in a “native style” were mentioned with evident admiration. His designs for a clock, a table and a credenza won a prize of 105 roubles.²¹ When in 1903 the TPSS received a donation of 4000 crowns from a private sponsor, a part of this sum paid for the making of a pair of chairs designed by Trojanowski.²² In the same year the designer sent in some drawings, answering the TPSS petition for designs of furniture for any type of room. The TPSS bought a design for a chair, paying Trojanowski 40 crowns.²³ Also, considering that he was still feeling his way in the area of furniture design, he could not pass up the opportunity to show his works at the exhibition co-organised by the TPSS and the “Sztuka” Association of Polish Artists in 1903. The designs were for a shelf and a chair, both made in the workshop of Józef Zabrze.²⁴ He also availed himself of the subsequent opportunities to present his works: at the Exhibition of Modern Fabrics and Ceramics (1905) he presented a cupboard made in the Ligęza Brothers workshop in Cracow.²⁵ In the same year, at a small-scale exhibition of works entered into a contest held in the Czapski Palace, he displayed a desk and a bookshelf. They were presented outside the contest, because Trojanowski was a member of its jury.²⁶ Towards the end of the year he and other members of the TPSS were commissioned to design the restaurant at the Old Theatre in Cracow. Trojanowski’s task was to design the furniture and decoration for the larger dining hall on the ground floor.

Starting from the 1905/1906 academic year, Trojanowski was employed as the second professor of Applied Art at the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw.²⁷ Yet even though he moved to Warsaw, he did not sever his ties with Cracow and the TPSS. In 1908 he sent in a design for a set of bedroom furniture for a contest held by the Museum of Technology and Industry. He won the second prize; the first went to Karol Tichy for a design that entered the annals of Polish design.²⁸ In addition, he took part in the Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors in a Garden Environment co-organised by the TPSS in 1912, designing a set of furniture for a bedroom in a suburban villa. His move to Warsaw brought him several commissions for pieces of furniture and for entire interiors. For Władysław Reymont, he made a set of furniture for a study; for Maria Papieska, a set of bedroom furniture. Some of these pieces were shown at the TPSS exhibition at Zachęta in 1908. Also in Warsaw, he designed interiors for the café at Grand Hotel and the Skating Rink in the Luxemburg Gallery, the curtain for the Chochlik Cabaret in the Swiss Valley park, and the furniture and decorations for the foyer in the Polish Theatre in Warsaw. In the

21 *Architekt*, 1902, no. 8, col. 95–96.

22 *II. sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1903...*, p. 8.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

24 *Katalog VII. wystawy Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich „Sztuka” i II. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”...*, p. 26.

25 *Katalog nowożytnych tkanin i wyrobów ceramicznych...*, p. 50.

26 “Wystawa projektów meblowych” [Exhibition of furniture design], *Czas*, 1905, no. 60, pp. 1, 2.

27 *IV. Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana w Krakowie r. 1905...*, pp. 6, 7.

28 “Konkurs przemysłu artystycznego”, *Czas*, 1908, no. 285, p. 2.

years 1915, 1917 and 1918 he exhibited designs for pieces of furniture and finished projects at Zachęta in Warsaw.²⁹

Few of the above pieces and interiors have survived until the present day; most of them are known from early 20th-century photographs. One of his cupboards is now in the National Museum in Cracow³⁰ and a set of furniture dating from the inter-war period is in a private collection in Warsaw. Before the 2nd World War the set of furniture designed for Papińska's bedroom was in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw; it is now considered to have been lost during the war. The interior of the larger dining hall in the Old Theatre restaurant in Cracow (Fig. 4),³¹ a set of dining-room furniture which used to be privately owned (Fig. 3),³² a bookshelf and a chair, also privately owned (Fig. 1),³³ and another bookshelf (Fig. 2)³⁴ are known from photographs. Reymont's studio (Fig. 8) and Papińska's bedroom (Fig. 9),³⁵ shown at the 1908 exhibition in Warsaw, and the suburban villa bedroom shown in Cracow in 1912 (Fig. 11),³⁶ are similarly known from photographs. The foyer of the Polish Theatre (Fig. 12),³⁷ the Grand Hotel café and the Skating Rink in the Luxemburg Gallery,³⁸ all of them in Warsaw, are known from press photographs, which are rarely of good quality.

Few designs for furniture have survived. Designs for a chair and a bedroom furniture set are kept in the Print Room of the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow,³⁹ the National Museum in Warsaw has a design for a chair, and a set of designs is in a private collection in Warsaw.

Pieces of furniture designed by Trojanowski are most probably still used by the heirs of the aficionados of Polish design living in the early 20th century; the current owners may no longer remember who designed these pieces. Trojanowski received a considerable number of private commissions for sets of furniture, so he modified his designs or re-used earlier ones. Photographs of the dining room in Aleksander Rother's house in Lvov illustrate this practice (Fig. 5)⁴⁰. To meet this private commission, Trojanowski paired chairs in the same shape as those in the Old Theatre

29 Materials from the Dictionary of Polish Artists, Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

30 National Museum in Cracow, MNK IV-Sp-204.

31 Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts (Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, henceforward: ASP), Cracow, no. 7948, 7949.

32 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7754, 7952, 8505, 8506.

33 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 8462.

34 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 8461.

35 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 13343/15, 13343/14; *Sztuka Stosowana. Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana* [Applied Art. Published by the Polish Applied Art Association] 1908, fasc. 9.

36 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7869, 13345/12, Jagiellonian University Museum, no. 492, 495, 497, 590, 591, 615, 616, 623, 637, 908.

37 "Teatr Polski w Warszawie" [The Polish Theatre in Warsaw], *Architekt*, 1913, fasc. 3–4.

38 "Grand Hotel – Grand Café", *Świat*, 1911, no. 37, p. 24.

39 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7751, 7744, 7745, 8488, 8382, 8422.

40 Jagiellonian University Museum, no. 779, 780, 783.