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Photographic Album of Sculptures from the State School of Wood Industry in Zakopane

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ABSTRACT

The album from the Collection of Iconography and Photography at the National Museum in Warsaw contains 119 black-and-white photographs depicting various objects - figurative sculptures and reliefs, interior furnishings and small utilitarian items – created at the State School of Wood Industry in Zakopane. It served as a commercial catalogue, and the use of French for the school's name and the titles of the works suggests that the school's output was intended for the international market. The album may have accompanied international exhibitions, in which the Zakopane school regularly participated during the interwar period. It could have entered the National Museum's collection even before the Second World War, alongside the State Art Collections. Some of the sculptures featured in the photographs were reproduced in school reports and the contemporary press. Together with formal analysis, this evidence allows for an approximate dating of the album to the years 1925–1939. The album is a valuable iconographic resource for the study of the history of the State School of Wood Industry and Polish interwar sculpture. It serves as an important comparative reference, supporting the verification of attributions and the preparation of expert opinions for the art market.

KEYWORDSphotographic albums, Art Deco, the interwar period, State School of WoodIndustry in Zakopane, art market, wooden sculpture, national style, Zakopaneart, National Museum in Warsaw

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The Collection of Iconography and Photography at the National Museum in Warsaw features a bound album with an insert (comprising two light-coloured protective paper sheets, 24 dark cardboard pages and four light-coloured paper sheets containing a list) fastened together by three metal screws.¹ The front cover includes an embossed logo: within an octagonal field, there is an inscription reading 'L'ECOLE | NATIONALE | DE L'INDUSTRIE | DU BOIS | ZAKOPANE | POLOGNE', accompanied by the embossed monogram 'PSPD' with the 'surprise cross' from the Podhale region – a swastika. Inside, 127 black-and-white photographs are affixed across the entire surface of the black cardboard pages, depicting objects crafted from wood: sculptural compositions (three-dimensional and relief works), sets of furniture and small utilitarian objects (fig. 1). The photographs are labelled with 119 sequential numbers, typically affixed below the images, corresponding to entries in the list found on the final four pages of the album. This list provides the titles of the works in both Polish and French. The monogram and logo of the school, featuring the name State School of Wood Industry (Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego - PSPD), unequivocally indicate that the album dates from the interwar period.

The album from the National Museum in Warsaw's collection served as a catalogue

showcasing the commercial offer of the State School of Wood Industry in Zakopane. Several photographs display sculptures with labels affixed to their pedestals, bearing handwritten prices in Polish złoty² and the list of objects concludes with contact details, facilitating direct purchases from the manufacturer.³ The photographs are unsigned, suggesting they were taken over a span of several years, likely by various photographers.⁴ The manner of showcasing the objects and the quality of some prints suggest that they served as an ongoing documentation of the school's achievements, intended for reproduction in contemporary publications (newspapers, industry journals, albums) as well as for the aforementioned commercial offer.⁵ Such catalogues were definitely in use during the 1930s, when the school's director was Adam Dobrodzicki. At that time, the institution maintained steady collaboration with commercial enterprises in London, Paris and the United States, among others, with orders placed remotely using product catalogues.⁶ The creation of this album can thus be dated to approximately the period of 1929–1939, a timeframe further corroborated by the stylistic features of the sculptures it presents. Additionally, some compositions were already completed in the 1925/1926 academic year, meaning their photographs may have been created even earlier than the catalogue that contains them.

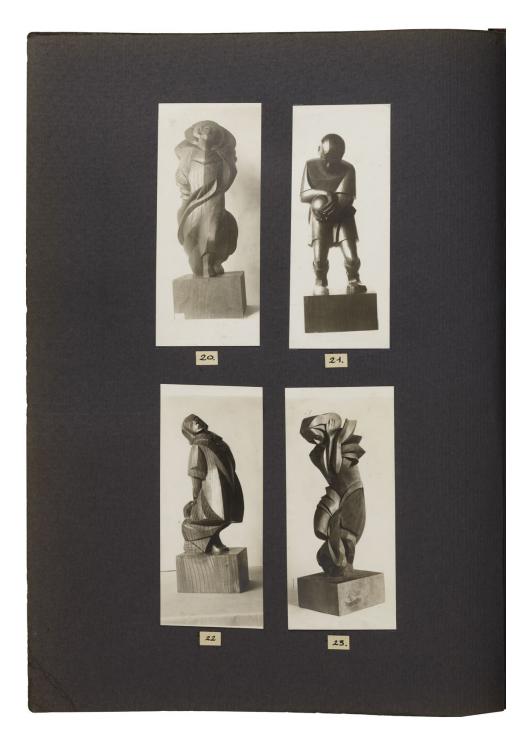


fig. 1 Page from the L'École nationale de l'industrie du bois. Zakopane. Pologne album [State School of Wood Industry. Zakopane. Poland], 1929–1939, photographic prints on cardboard, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

From the Woodcarving School to the State School of Wood Industry

The idea of establishing a vocational woodcarving school in Zakopane emerged within Polish intellectual circles as early as the 1860s. However, it was not until the founding of the Tatra Society (Towarzystwo Tatrzańskie) in 1873, which included the 'support of mountain industry' in its statutory objectives, that led to an agreement between the Tatra Society board and Maciej Marduła (1837–1894), a highlander from Olcza, and the opening of the Woodcarving School on 10 July 1876.⁷ Under Marduła's supervision, students produced small souvenir items and church furnishings, which were showcased at the Agricultural and Industrial Exhibition in Lviv in 1877. However, the costs of maintaining the school exceeded the modest resources of the Tatra Society, which was forced to seek financial support from the Austrian Ministry of Trade. As a result, from 1878 onwards, the institution was integrated into the *Fachschulen* system, a network of vocational schools under the authority of

the Österreichisches Museum für Kunst und Industrie. By 1891 it had been renamed the Imperial and Royal Vocational School of Wood Industry (C.K. Szkoła Zawodowa Przemysłu Drzewnego).⁸ Its first director (and since 1886 principal) was the Czech František Neužil (1845–1899), who implemented a teaching programme based on copying and replicating historical styles. This approach met with sharp criticism from Stanisław Witkiewicz (1851-1915), who, in the late 1880s and early 1890s, referred to Neužil's school as a 'breeding ground of the Tyrolean-Viennese taste',⁹ alien to local traditions and the national style. The author of On the Mountain Pass (Na przełęczy) and like-minded Polish patriots, all of them lovers of the Podhale region, viewed highlander architecture and ornamentation as evidence of an ancient Slavic culture. In it, they saw a foundation for the revival of Polish national identity and culture, shaping the myth of the highlander as a talented creator, embodying both patriotic and artistic virtues, while portraying the Tatra Mountains as a symbolic space of national rebirth. In this context, it is highly surprising that the Imperial and Royal School of Wood Industry became, in Witkiewicz's view, a natural rival in the campaign to establish a Zakopane style that would be distinctly Polish. The conflict with the school escalated after 1896, when the post of principal was taken over by the architect Edgar Kováts (1849–1912). Both Kováts and Witkiewicz sought to formalize a style based on highlander ornamentation, but it was Kováts who succeeded first, presenting his original 'Zakopane method' in the interior design of the Galician Pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition. The execution of this project was entrusted to teachers and students of the Zakopane School of Wood Industry.

In 1901 Kováts was transferred to a position at the Lviv School of Technology, and his post in Zakopane was taken over by Stanisław Barabasz (1857–1949) – the first Polish director of the institution. This appointment slightly softened Witkiewicz's stance towards the school. Barabasz, for instance, introduced life studies into the curriculum and relaxed the rigid historical style framework. He remained at the helm until 1922, overseeing the institution's transition into the newly independent Polish state under the name State School of Wood Industry – the name found in the photographic album under discussion.

The interwar period in the school's history is relatively well documented, and the sculptures produced by students during this time - with their characteristic, Cubist-inspired forms - became synonymous with Polish decorative arts and the national style. This distinctive aesthetic, highly appealing to the public, developed under the leadership of Karol Stryjeński (1887–1932), who headed the school from 1922. Stryjeński was a reformer who shifted the school's focus away from a purely vocational and craft-oriented institution. To this day, he is remembered as an outstanding educator, treating each student as an individual, encouraging them to develop their personality and talents. Among his pupils were Antoni Kenar (1906–1959) and Marian Wnuk (1906–1967), both of whom went on to become renowned artists and educators. One of Stryjeński's greatest achievements was the school's success at the 1925 International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris. During the interwar years, the Zakopane style, recognized and awarded in the European capital of art, entered the canon of Poland's national style, which marked the beginning of a short but spectacular period in the school's history. Student sculptures were exhibited widely, attracting demand both in Poland and abroad. Consequently, the profile and style of the school's output were upheld by Stryjeński's successors: Wojciech Brzega (1872–1941), who served as acting director following Stryjeński's departure for Warsaw in 1927, and especially Adam Dobrodzicki (1882–1944), who officially managed the State School of Wood Industry from 1929 to 1936. The school's pre-war legacy was later upheld by its final director before the Second World War, Marian Wimmer (1897–1970).¹⁰

After the Success in Paris: The State School of Wood Industry in the Interwar Period

The revitalization of trade and the expansion of the school's exports in the 1930s were made possible by the prestige that student works

(particularly sculptures) had gained in the previous decade, following the reforms introduced by Karol Stryjeński. When the new principal arrived from Kraków in 1922, his primary task was to prepare the school's showcase for the 1925 International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris. As we know, he fulfilled this assignment brilliantly. The Teaching Section of the Paris exhibition featured, among other things, 37 pieces from the school's sculpture department. These included decorative and functional forms, all created in Zakopane under the guidance of the principal and teachers: Wojciech Brzega, Roman Olszowski, Ksenofont Celewicz and Jan Śliwka.¹¹ The State School of Wood Industry was awarded three Grand Prix and a gold medal. Stryjeński himself received two honorary diplomas and several medals: one silver and three gold.¹² Already during the exhibition, the Zakopane sculptures attracted attention from visitors. Some works were sold, and several were stolen. The school responded by producing replicas of the stolen pieces and shipping them to Paris. The school's Parisian triumph was also strategically used for national propaganda purposes, largely thanks to Jerzy Warchałowski, the commissioner of the Polish section, who firmly established Zakopane sculpture within the canon of the national style, where it remained unchallenged for decades.¹³

Stryjeński introduced innovative teaching methods at PSPD, inspired by concepts developed within the Kraków Workshops (Warsztaty Krakowskie). He abandoned the traditional practice of copying historical designs and the exclusive execution of models designed by professors, which had been standard in vocational education at this level. Under the new curriculum, teachers' roles were limited to stimulating and unlocking the creative potential of students,¹⁴ whose imagination and innate sensitivity were thus freed from rigid stylistic conventions. This individual approach to students also influenced how their works were treated, as seen, for instance, in the presentation of their sculptures in Paris. Each of the 43 objects sent to the exhibition was clearly attributed to its author: the student's name, age and class were listed, along with the title of the work and the material used.¹⁵ This practice

continued in the following years. For example, the 1925/1926 School Report, published by the school's teaching staff, featured 12 reproductions of student sculptures, each labelled with the student's name, the title of the work, material and dimensions. Also included was the name of the teacher whose class had produced the piece.¹⁶ A similar hierarchy of authorship was maintained by Warchałowski in 1928, in his aforementioned publication summarizing the Paris exhibition, titled Polish Decorative Art.¹⁷

In this context, it is significant that the album from the National Museum in Warsaw presents student works anonymously. This confirms that, following Stryjeński's departure, his educational principles were guickly abandoned and the school returned to earlier practices, with students' works treated as mere craftsmanship, limited to reproducing established patterns. This shift is reflected in the school's annual reports, published since the time of its first principal, Franciszek Neužil, which credited only teachers and school leaders as authors of works. It was Stryjeński who overturned this hierarchy, which - coupled with his innovative teaching methods – met with strong resistance from some of the Zakopane milieu. However, he successfully defended his programme, and the awards won by the school and its principal at the 1925 Paris exhibition validated his approach. These achievements not only brought him recognition, but also laid foundations for the lingering myth of the Zakopane school's legendary international triumph and the pivotal role played by Stryjeński. Nevertheless, after Stryjeński's resignation in 1927, the continuation of his teaching model was not guaranteed. At the time, Wojciech Brzega temporarily took over as the school's principal, supported by his close collaborator, Roman Olszowski (1890–1957). Both were experienced sculptors and educators who had worked closely with Stryjeński, sharing many of his views. It was under their supervision that students created works for the Paris exhibition. However, without Stryjeński's authority, his local opponents revived criticisms of his teaching direction. In response, Brzega defended the artistic value of student works,¹⁸ and the 1929 General National Exhibition (Powszechna Wystawa Krajowa) in Poznań became a key testing ground for

both sides of the dispute. Brzega opted for a proven strategy, drawing from the solutions successfully employed in Paris. He was backed by Roman Olszowski, who tirelessly worked on preparing the exhibits.¹⁹ The Government Palace in Poznań was filled with dancers, highlander women, depictions of the legendary highwayman Janosik, stylized Madonnas and saints, and small decorative objects. However, this time, the response was markedly different from the raving reviews of 1925. In the four years between the two exhibitions, notions concerning Poland's official artistic representation had evolved. The celebration of 'primitive' folk art was no longer the chosen vision. Instead, the focus shifted toward highlighting the modernity and potential of the young country. A critic reviewing the Poznań exhibition of Polish art schools wrote: '[b]y yielding to the influences of folk art, we easily gain in exoticism, yet at the same time, we distance ourselves from the mature refinement of the West. [...] Folk art [...] when wisely applied by the healthy instinct of the people [...] is extraordinarily beautiful and valuable; however, when the same methods [...] are transferred to pure art [...] they become a banal, misguided mistake'.²⁰

Adam Dobrodzicki was appointed principal of the State School of Wood Industry in May 1929, shortly after the Poznań exhibition. The lack of the expected success likely contributed to the perception that Stryjeński's methods were outdated. Dobrodzicki himself was openly sceptical of the Zakopane style and pragmatic about highlander traditions.²¹ He saw economic potential in the school and aimed to achieve financial independence and self-sufficiency. Recognizing the continued popularity of Zakopane sculptures among both Polish and foreign customers, he maintained annual school exhibitions during the summer season, when tourists flooded the Podhale region. The school also participated in exhibitions in Gdańsk, Warsaw, Bucharest, Hamburg, Berlin, Baltimore (1936)²² and New York (1933, Brooklyn Museum),²³ as well as the 1937 Paris World Exhibition (Arts et techniques dans la vie moderne), where it received an honorary diploma in Section III: Artistic and Technical Education.²⁴

In fact, the album from the National Museum in Warsaw may have been created specifically

for the 1937 Paris exhibition. Its provenance and acquisition history remain unclear. The only known fact is that it was added to the museum's main library inventory before 1997. This catalogue, established after the Second World War (likely in 1957), included both post-war acquisitions and earlier works.²⁵ In 1938, the museum acquired, among others, the State Art Collections (Państwowe Zbiory Sztuki), which held the broadest selection of contemporary Polish art in the country.²⁶ The discussed album could have been presented by the school as a commercial offer to a private collector or one of the institutions that were building their own collections, and, together with them, it may have entered the National Museum's library holdings.

Photographic Documentation of the School's Output

The photographs included in the album were taken in the photographic studio of the State School of Wood Industry, established to document students' achievements and the school's history. During the interwar period, the studio was directed by Stanisław Zdyb (1884–1954), a graduate of the school (1902), sculptor and mountaineer, who, before the First World War, had owned the 'Tatras' Artistic Photography Studio. In 1925, he was employed at PSPD as a woodcarving instructor.²⁷ The school's photographic documentation is now housed in the Archive of the Tatra Museum in Zakopane. A significant portion of the reproductions found in the album from the National Museum in Warsaw is also preserved there. However, the archival inventory unfortunately dates these images very broadly, to 1920–1939. This timeframe can be narrowed down by analysing the formal characteristics of the objects reproduced in the album. Some of these works were featured in articles and reviews about the Zakopane school, published in the interwar press. Assuming that the chosen reproductions reflected the school's current artistic activities and achievements, their dating can be approximated based on the publication dates of these texts.

Reproductions of selected objects from the album appear in sources dated between 1926 and 1938. The earliest one is the 1925/1926



fig. 2 Highwayman, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

School Report,²⁸ which includes photographs showing the figures of a reaper (album no. 24),²⁹ highwayman (album no. 31)³⁰ and Saint Christopher (album no. 82),³¹ as well as a fragment of a roadside shrine (album no. 2).³² The objects were attributed to their makers (though not necessarily their designers), all of whom worked under the supervision of teacher Roman Olszowski. These were Adam Kobierski – an unenrolled student, Józef Kiszka and Karol Szostak – both third-year students and Marian Dudek – a fourth-year student of sculpture under Olszowski and carpentry under Bednarz. The Highwayman from the museum album was titled Hunter in 1926 (fig. 2),³³ and Dudek's work Roadside Shrine forms part of a column shrine reproduced in the album, supplemented with a crowning figure (album no. 2). Another object stylistically corresponding to Stryjeński's leadership is a chandelier (album no. 85),³⁴ which is almost identical to the lamps in the dining hall of the Gasienicowa Hall mountain refuge, crafted by PSPD students under Stryjeński's supervision.³⁵ Thus, the album contains objects that can be definitively dated to 1926–1927, or shortly thereafter.³⁶ However, some works must have been created much later. Among them is a series of 12 sculptures titled Zodiac Signs,³⁷ attributed to Adam Dobrodzicki (<u>fig. 3</u>). Each figure was individually crafted by students in the late 1930s. It is particularly noteworthy that the album documents the full set of 12 sculptures, which until now had only been known partially, through compositions reproduced in the press and individual pieces held in public and private art collections.³⁸

The album includes photographs of Marian figures, among which some continue the iconographic themes and patterns developed

during Stryjeński's tenure, when statues of Madonna, exhibited in 1924 at Czesław Garliński's Salon in Warsaw and later at the Paris exhibition, were recognized as the quintessential expression of the national style, derived from folk 'primitivism'.³⁹ These sculptures depicted a simplified figure of Mary, standing without the Child on a crescent moon and dressed either in a garment resembling peasant attire or enveloped in a flowing cloak reaching her feet – a reference to the popular



fig. 3 From the 12 Signs of the Zodiac series (Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio), page from the L'École nationale... album, c.1936, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

folk representation of Our Lady of Skępe. This traditional model is reflected in the statue of *Our Lady* (fig. 4),⁴⁰ distinguished by soft modelling and a characteristic base combining a prism and a hemisphere, as well as in *Mater Dolorosa* (fig. 5).⁴¹ Thanks to archival photographs⁴² and sketches preserved in private collections,⁴³ these compositions can be linked to Wojciech Brzega's studio. Brzega's students also created funerary sculptures: reliefs set within square fields, similar to the Saint Teresa and Saint Francis representations reproduced in the album (album nos 99 and 100).⁴⁴ A more elaborate relief composition, *Pietà* (fig. 6),⁴⁵





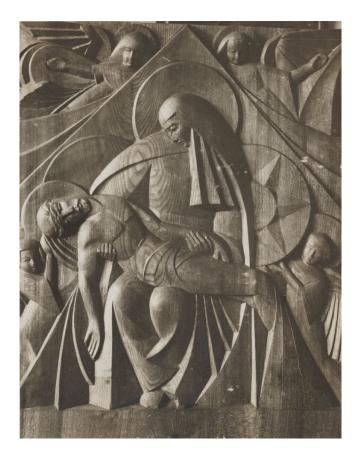
fig. 4 Our Lady, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

fig. 5 Mater Dolorosa, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

is an original work by Brzega, executed in the late 1920s for the Woźniakowski family tomb chapel in Koniusza, Lesser Poland. This exceptional example of Brzega's work is notably influenced by Art Deco, with clear references to the Nativity altar in Jan Szczepkowski's *Polish Shrine*, which was showcased at the 1925 Paris exhibition. It is likely that this one-time departure from Brzega's typical aesthetic was not his own initiative but rather reflected the patrons' wishes.

A different approach to the Marian theme is evident in the *Immaculate* figure (album no. 14),⁴⁶ which exhibits an exaggeratedly slender silhouette. This design deviates significantly from primitivist synthesis. Instead, its appeal lies in its elongated proportions, classical restraint, expressive rhythm of forms and decorative fluidity of contours. This type of figure is characteristic of Roman Olszowski's work, suggesting that the *Immaculate* may either be his own design or a creation by one of his students. One example of this design is currently held in a private collection.⁴⁷

Several works in the album can be attributed to students from Roman Olszowski's workshop, including *Zbójnicki Dance* by Antoni Biegaj (<u>fig. 7</u>),⁴⁸ *Pierrot with a Guitar* (album no. 19)⁴⁹ by Stanisław Wiśniewski, and presumably also *Girl with a Basket* (album no. 86)⁵⁰ by Zygmunt



- fig. 6 *Pietà* by Wojciech Brzega, photograph from the *L'École nationale...* album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw
- fig. 7 Zbójnicki Dance, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw





- fig. 8 Faith, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw
- fig. 9 The Flagellated, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw



Dziewoński and Oberek (album no. 106)⁵¹ by Edward Piwowarski.⁵² Another piece from the same studio is *Faith* (fig. 8),⁵³ a composition characterized by a vertical arrangement of interwoven figurative and geometric forms. This sculpture was displayed at the school exhibition in Zakopane in July 1936. During an interview with a journalist from *Dziennik Poznański*, Olszowski highlighted it as a noteworthy and original figurative composition, describing it as constructed 'entirely from geometric solids, interconnected with mathematical precision'.⁵⁴ His admiration for *Faith* was likely influenced by its similarity to his own earlier works, *Legend* (1927) and *Bend* (1929).⁵⁵ Based on formal characteristics, several other works in the album can also be attributed to Olszowski's students, including the *Skarga* group (album no. 27),⁵⁶ the figure of Christ (*The Flagellated*),⁵⁷ made by Wojciech Półtorak⁵⁸



fig. 10 Crucifix, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

(fig. 9) and Crucifix (fig. 10).⁵⁹ Olszowski himself was the author of the Sacred Heart Altar (fig. 11),⁶⁰ designed in 1931 for the chapel of the new Climatic Hospital (today, the altar is housed in the church in Murzasichle).⁶¹

The album also contains a series of genre sculptures, including figures (often of children and young women)⁶² and animal representations, which do not exhibit any connection to the Zakopane style or Podhale folk traditions. Instead, they are highly stylized, with cubic forms shaped by prismatic surfaces. Their distinguishing features include a strong decorative quality, simplified themes and an attractive artistic language reminiscent of Futurism and

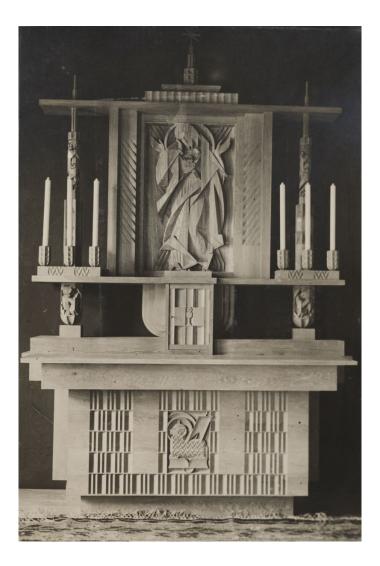


fig. 11 Sacred Heart Altar by Roman Olszowski, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

Cubism. However, their artistic value remains debatable, particularly due to the similarities between different models and the repetitive nature of the designs. These projects are commonly associated with Adam Dobrodzicki, based on his known involvement with the *Zodiac* cycle and the likely practice of students producing works designed by the school principal. This stylistic trend may have also been promoted by other teachers in the sculpture department: Roman Olszowski, Wojciech Brzega, Stanisław Zdyb and Jan Zapotoczny (1886–1959), under whose direction students created a variety of small utilitarian wooden objects⁶³ (album nos 56 and 102, fig. 12).⁶⁴



fig. 12 Small wooden objects, photograph from the *L'École nationale...* album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

fig. 13 Idyll, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw



Artistic Output Versus Production

The clear stylistic and qualitative differentiation in the school's output during the 1930s resulted from a strategic shift towards increased production and intensified sales. At the beginning of the decade, a reviewer of the school's exhibitions emphasized that under Dobrodzicki's leadership, PSPD had remained faithful to the principles introduced by Stryjeński, with students composing works independent of 'stylistic tradition', acting both as designers and makers of their pieces.65 He particularly praised Olszowski's students, recognizing in their sculptures 'the hallmarks [...] of mature works of art'.⁶⁶ However, just five years later, a correspondent from Dziennik Poznański observed an evident 'similarity between the sculptures, as if they had all come from the same hand'.⁶⁷ This process of homogenization developed gradually and was

accompanied by a departure from Stryjeński's programme, which had been based on the freedom of students' imagination and talent. By 1936, Olszowski himself admitted: 'The greatest tragedy for a student [...] is the moment when he realizes that art is the conscious organization of forms, a conscious creative effort. When he comes here, he wants to create as a nightingale sings, as his ancestors once did. He rebels against conscious, logical creation. Whoever overcomes this moment of crisis is saved'.68 That same year, Marian Piechal, reviewing the school's exhibition, stated explicitly that teachers were the true authors of most designs, while students' tasks were limited to 'working the material and executing the final form'.⁶⁹

In an effort to increase the output of the sculpture department, Dobrodzicki decided to modernize the production process by purchasing a machine capable of duplicating an original model into four identical copies.⁷⁰



fig. 14 Highlander's Wife, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

These works were then sold both domestically and abroad, with students receiving payment for their labour, while the director secured essential funds to maintain the institution and invest in it. However, by the end of the 1920s, the favourable market conditions collapsed, as Brzega later recalled with bitterness: 'The price dropped and works for which [Dobrodzicki] used to pay [students] a hundred złoty are now sold for thirty or forty złoty apiece. Likewise, the duplication machine, for which [the principal] obtained seven or ten thousand złoty, now stands unused in *Strug*'.⁷¹

The result of Dobrodzicki's approach is the existence of sculptures produced in at least several, nearly identical copies, where one version is the original model, while the others (in unknown multiples of four) are replicas.72 Among the known preserved works, as well as based on an analysis of archival iconographic material, it is easy to identify these 'sculptural families'. The previously mentioned Oberek, reproduced in the press in 1931 as the work of Edward Piwowarski, has several counterparts in private collections. One such piece, attributed to Władysław Kut, is dated slightly later, to 1937.⁷³ The identical curvature and planar arrangement of these works clearly indicate that the later version was produced through meticulous, mechanical reproduction. A similar pair consists of Highlander's Wife, reproduced in the album (fig. 14),⁷⁴ and the object exhibited at the Warsaw–Zakopane Connection exhibition in Królikarnia Gallery in the summer of 2017. Both works, identical in form, were made from two different pieces of wood.⁷⁵ A detailed analysis of the grain patterns undeniably confirms the existence of a third example, which was illustrated in an article by Kazimierz Malinowski in Arkady magazine in 1937.⁷⁶ At least two more replicas are held in private collections.⁷⁷ It should be emphasized here that these multiplied objects often vary significantly in quality and artistic value, depending on the technical skill and talent of the individual craftsmen.

We also know that the Saint Christopher figure (fig. 15),⁷⁸ created by Karol Szostak around 1925, was gifted by Stryjeński to his friend, the painter Rafał Malczewski. This likely took place during Stryjeński's stay in Zakopane, meaning the gift was made before 1927 and no later than December 1932. The sculpture remained in the possession of the Malczewski family for many years until it was recently donated by the heirs to the Tatra Museum in Zakopane. This confirms that the reproduction of Saint Christopher in the album must depict a different object. The question remains whether this replica was created by Szostak himself or whether the admired model was entrusted to another student (or students) for reproduction. This question is justified, particularly given that the photographic album



fig. 15 Saint Christopher, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw



fig. 16 Radiant Madonna, photograph from the L'École nationale... album, National Museum in Warsaw photo National Museum in Warsaw

under discussion provides evidence of PSPD's long-standing practice of producing the same models over an extended period. An analysis of available iconographic materials suggests that designs created during the 1925/1926 school year continued to be produced until the outbreak of the Second World War. One example is the *Radiant Madonna* (album no. 89). This piece, original in terms of form and iconography, was reproduced in the press in 1927 (fig. 16)⁷⁹ and then again in 1938, as the work of Wacław Popowski,⁸⁰ a 1931 graduate of the school. It is unlikely – although not impossible – that the sculpture featured in the album and reproduced in 1938 was the very same piece, still awaiting a buyer after more than a decade. Additionally, the Tatra Museum holds another version of this figure, distinguished by its polychrome decoration – an artistic practice commonly employed at PSPD in the 1930s. Could Popowski have continued working with the school by producing sculptures for sale, long after completing his studies? Another possibility is that subsequent reproductions made by students were still attributed to the original author. The issue is further complicated by the common practice of reusing the same works under different, often modified, titles in various reproductions and publications,⁸¹ as well as the tradition of reusing old designs. Among the objects reproduced in the album, the latest examples can be dated to the years 1936–1938, and one documented case of such later use (and, by the same token, likely also a later sale) is the *Pan Twardowski* statuette (album no. 74),⁸² which in 1939 was awarded as the first prize in a skiing competition.⁸³

The discourse surrounding PSPD sculptures, as reflected in the writings of scholars and critics, reveals a distinct duality in how these works were perceived in terms of craftsmanship versus artistic merit. Reviewers of the school's exhibitions noted the technical and replicative nature of students' work, a direct consequence of the school's teaching programme. Since its foundation, PSPD offered vocational training, focused on equipping students with practical skills in carpentry, furniture-making and woodwork. However, during the interwar period, the school's sculptures began to be evaluated separately from its furniture and carpentry output: as works of art with an individual expression. This shift was yet another achievement of Karol Stryjeński, who managed to establish an entirely new aesthetic for the school's production, radically different from historicism, the Tyrolean style and even Witkiewicz's Zakopane Style. While PSPD's sculpture department was still criticized for its low level of instruction in the early 1920s,⁸⁴ by June 1924 a major exhibition of students' works was held at Czesław Garliński's Salon in Warsaw. Unlike previous showcases, which typically focused on decorative woodcraft and furniture, on display were mostly small-scale figural sculptures with religious and genre themes. Warsaw critics responded favourably,⁸⁵ emphasizing both the exotic and primitive qualities of the works while simultaneously recognizing their national character. The Garliński exhibition marked the beginning of perceiving Zakopane sculptures as epitomizing the Polish national style. This transformation culminated in PSPD's participation in the 1925 Paris Exhibition, where

Jerzy Warchałowski, commissioner of the Polish Section, permanently solidified the link between Podhale craftsmanship and national Polish art. He namely identified the following traits as distinctly Polish: 'a passion for structural design, even in ornamentation, and a traditional inclination towards carving in soft wood, treated in a carpenter fashion'.⁸⁶

The image of Stryjeński's directorship as a period of creative freedom for students, which translated into the artistic value of their sculptures, was strongly emphasized by a later historian of the school, Halina Kenarowa. She highlighted the distinctiveness of Stryjeński's methods compared to those used both during the Galician period (1876–1918) and in the 1930s, when students' talent was overshadowed by imitation and repetitive production. As she herself admitted, she wrote her monograph 'as a companion to Antoni Kenar and a witness to the school's post-war history'.⁸⁷ She presented the State Secondary School of Artistic Techniques as a continuation of the pre-war PSPD sculpture department, and Kenar as the inheritor of Stryjeński's pedagogical talent. From this perspective, emphasizing the school's artistic profile was particularly important in freeing the Zakopane institution from its vocational categorization and the folk art paradigm. Kenarowa's persuasive and well-documented portrayal of the school continues to shape the identity of Kenar's teachers and students and significantly influences the reception of their work today.

For an art historian, however, it is difficult to determine the extent to which Stryjeński truly allowed his students creative freedom and whether the school's output was primarily artistic or industrial in nature. During Stryjeński's tenure, one of the sculpture instructors was Brzega, and privately held sketches from his students seem to illustrate independent explorations, later realized as three-dimensional sculptures. However, it is impossible to verify whether this practice was widespread or how consistently it was followed in the workshops of other teachers, such as Olszowski and Zapotoczny. There is a lack of sources, including individual teaching programmes or documentation of the various stages of artistic training. Press reports do not provide reliable

insight either, as they often contain ambiguous or even contradictory statements, making it difficult to assess scope and nature of the teachers' influence. It should also be noted that many PSPD instructors had formal academic training (for instance, Brzega and Zapotoczny), and all of them pursued personal artistic ambitions outside their schoolwork, exhibiting their works in art salons. Interestingly, student sculptures displayed notable stylistic similarities, which led critics to refer to them as 'Stryjeński's Madonnas'⁸⁸ – a fact suggesting that teachers did indeed present their students with inspirational models.

Over time, the perceived value of PSPD sculptures has evolved significantly. While highly esteemed in the 1920s and eagerly purchased in the following decade, oral accounts suggest that immediately after the Second World War, the school was quick to part with these works. However, in later years, as interest in Art Deco grew and knowledge of PSPD's history spread, these sculptures gained attention among collectors and began appearing on the art market, attracting buyers willing to pay substantial sums. The appeal of these objects is easy to understand. For many, their value lies in the sentimental attachment to highlander culture, deeply ingrained in Polish national identity. Buyers also appreciate their decorative qualities and their association with the highly sought-after Art Deco style. The mass production of Zakopane sculptures and their varying artistic quality seems to have little impact on their desirability. As argued above, the questions of uniqueness and authorship remain

complex and difficult to define. The issue of craftsmanship and artistic talent becomes even more ambiguous when considering the extent of teacher involvement in the final appearance of the works and the difficulty in distinguishing between designer and maker. It is unclear whether these matters can ever be definitively resolved, but there is no doubt that further research is necessary. Our understanding of PSPD's legacy should be expanded through archival research and object inventories. However, most unexamined materials remain in private hands, awaiting discovery. Some of these highly valuable sources are held by institutions, such as the photographic album discussed in this study. As demonstrated here, it functioned as a PSPD catalogue, most likely prepared for department stores. It could also have been used in connection with international exhibitions, in which the Zakopane school regularly participated. The vast majority of the works featured in the album are small-scale figural sculptures with genre and religious themes. Additionally, it includes several religious relief compositions, small decorative wooden objects and a few pieces of furniture. The album can be dated to the 1930s, as the earliest reproduced designs originate from 1925–1926, and it is known that one of the sculptures featured was still in use in 1939. This album is an extremely valuable iconographic resource for studying the history of the State School of Wood Industry and Polish interwar sculpture. It represents a valuable comparative reference and a solid foundation for preparing expert opinions for the art market.

Translated by Aleksandra Szkudłapska

NOTES

- L'Ecole nationale de l'industrie du bois.
 Zakopane. Pologne [State School of Wood Industry. Zakopane. Poland], 1929–1939, album of photographic prints mounted on cardboard and bound in leather and metal, 40 × 33.5 × 4.5 cm, National Museum in Warsaw, inv. nos DI 101121/1–127 MNW. I thank Katarzyna Mączewska, curator of the Collection of Iconography and Photography at the National Museum in Warsaw, for her assistance in correcting information on the album.
- ² E.g., album no. 18 (inv. no. DI 101121/18 MNW) – 60 złoty, album no. 19 (inv. no. DI 101121/19 MNW) – 75 złoty, album no. 24 (inv. no. DI 101121/24 MNW) – 110 złoty, album no. 86 (inv. no. DI 101121/88 MNW) – 42zł, album no. 104 (inv. no. DI 101121/112 MNW) – 100 złoty, album no. 105 (inv. no. DI 101121/113 MNW) – 100 złoty, album no. 106 (inv. no. DI 101121/114 MNW) – 250 złoty, album no. 109 (inv. no. DI 101121/117 MNW) – 80 złoty, album no. 114 (inv. no. DI 101121/122 MNW) – 66 złoty.
- ³ 'Pour toutes les informations (achat compris) s'adresser: Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego – Zakopane – Pologne (L'Ecole nationale de l'industrie du bois – Zakopane)'.
- ⁴ Photographic documentation of the State School of Wood Industry's output was entrusted to full-time teachers. During the interwar period, the role of school photographer was held by Antoni Święch (1856–1931), who was succeeded in 1925 by Stanisław Zdyb (1884–1954). It can be assumed that Zdyb was the author of most, if not all, of the photographs in the album.
- ⁵ The album as a work of photographic art is not the subject of this text.
- (z. dr.), 'Wśród piękna zaklętego w drzewo', Dzień Dobry (16 October 1937), as cited in Halina Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej Szkoły Przemysłu Drzewnego do szkoły Kenara. Studium z dziejów szkolnictwa zawodowoartystycznego w Polsce (Kraków, 1978), p. 192.
- Archives of the Dr Tytus Chałubiński Tatra Museum in Zakopane, ref. no.

AR/No/185/6:1876 – Umowa pomiędzy Maciejem Mardułą a Wydziałem Towarzystwa Tatrzańskiego, 6 June 1876, MS, fol. 80. The school's history is provided based on Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej...; Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera, Stylizacje i modernizacje. O rzeźbie i rzeźbiarzach w Zakopanem w latach 1879–1939 (Warsaw, 2013).

- ⁸ In reports from the late 1880s, the school is referred to as the Imperial and Royal Professional School for the Wood Industry in Zakopane (C.K. Szkoła Fachowa dla Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem).
- ⁹ Witkiewicz used this term in Stanisław Witkiewicz, 'Na przełęczy', in Pisma tatrzańskie, vol. 1 (Kraków, 1963), p. 48.
- ¹⁰ During the occupation, the school operated under the name Berufsfachschule für Goralische Volkskunst. Another name change occurred following the 1948 reorganization, which resulted in the creation of two separate institutions: the Technical School of Construction (Technikum Budowlane) and the Secondary School of Artistic Techniques (Liceum Technik Plastycznych). After Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej..., pp. 206–264.
- ¹¹ Wojciech Brzega and Roman Olszowski taught sculpture (figurative and ornamental, respectively), while Ksenofont Celewicz and Jan Śliwka taught carpentry.
- Anna M. Drexlerowa, Andrzej K. Olszewski, Polska i Polacy na Powszechnych Wystawach Światowych 1851–2000 (Warsaw, 2005), pp. 206–209.
- 13 See Jerzy Warchałowski, Polska sztuka dekoracyjna (Warsaw, 1928).
- ¹⁴ Karol Stryjeński, 'Aperçu sur l'enseignement de l'art decoratif', *L'Amour de l'Art*, no. 7 (1924), p. 258.
- ¹⁵ The most common material was wood, with clay and stone appearing less frequently. Special Collection of the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, IS PAN, Archiwum Wystawy Paryskiej 1925, inv. nos 808–17 – Spis prac na wystawę oddziału rzeźby, MS, fol. 94a.
- Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem. Sprawozdanie z roku

szkolnego 1925/1926 (Zakopane, [1926]). Three woodcuts attached to the report were treated in a similar fashion.

- 17 Warchałowski, Polska sztuka dekoracyjna..., pp. 156–158.
- 18 Wojciech Brzega, Żywot górala poczciwego. Wspomnienia i gawędy, selection, editing and commentary by Anna Micińska, Michał Jagiełło (Kraków, 1969), p. 93.
- ¹⁹ Ibid., p. 94.
- 20 Władysław Lam, 'Szkoły artystyczne na Powszechnej Wystawie Krajowej', Dziennik Poznański, no. 135 (1929), p. 9.
- 21 Years later, the negative assessment of Dobrodzicki's actions was reinforced by the school's monographer, Halina Kenarowa: Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej..., pp. 189–198.
- 22 These exhibitions are listed by Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej..., p. 193.
- 23 Objects from the exhibition are held at the Polish Museum of America in Chicago, having been donated by Maria Werter. I would like to thank Monika Nowak for this piece of information.
- Drexlerowa, Olszewski, Polska i Polacy...,
 p. 235.
- ²⁵ I extend my sincere gratitude to Danuta Jackiewicz and Małgorzata Polakowska from the National Museum in Warsaw for their assistance in obtaining information and access to the object. The album bears the following numbers: MN 22626 (crossed out) – no. of the NMW's library main inventory and DI 101121/1–127 MNW. It was transferred to the Collection of Iconography and Photography (prev. Photographic and Iconographic Collection) via an internal protocol dated 20 Feb. 1997.
- 26 The collection was placed on a fiftyyear deposit on 29 January 1938 and also included an art library. See Wanda Wojtyńska, 'Działalność Państwowych Zbiorów Sztuki', *Kronika Zamkowa*, nos 1–2 (49–50) (2005), p. 193.
- ²⁷ Chrudzimska-Uhera, *Stylizacje i modernizacje...*, pp. 111–112.
- 28 Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem. Sprawozdanie...
- ²⁹ Inv. no. DI 101121/24 MNW.
- ³⁰ Inv. no. DI 101121/31 MNW.
- 31 Inv. no. DI 101121/84 MNW.

- ³² Inv. no. DI 101121/2 MNW.
- Another example of a sculpture's title change is the case of a figurine of a young woman, labelled in the album as Dancer (album no. 75, inv. no. DI 101121/77 MNW), but now known on the antique market as the Madonna of Highwaymen, see Zakopane, Zakopane, słońce, góry i górale [DESA UNICUM catalogue], auction of 28 Jan. 2021 (Warsaw, 2021), lot 45.
- ³⁴ Inv. no. DI 101121/87 MNW.
- ³⁵ Wierchy, Ann. 11 (1933), p. 158.
- 36 Karol Stryjeński moved to Warsaw in 1927 and died in December 1932.
- 37 Inv. no. DI 101121/37-48 MNW.
- 38 The author is familiar with the following compositions: Capricorn, Libra, Aquarius, Pisces, Scorpio, Cancer and Sagittarius. Marian Piechal, 'Estetyka rzeźby drzewnej', Tygodnik Ilustrowany, no. 38(4006) (1936), pp. 713–714; Kazimierz Malinowski, 'Szkoła rzeźby w Zakopanem', Arkady, no. 10 (1937), pp. 543-544; Zakopane. Wyrzeźbione. Namalowane / Zakopane. Carved. Painted, ed. Paweł Drabarczyk vel Grabarczyk et al. (Warsaw, 2023), cat. nos 70-72, pp. 102-105; one object is held at the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków, while several others are in private collections. According to Piechal, the Zodiac cycle was commissioned by the Geographical Institute in Warsaw. (Piechal, 'Estetyka rzeźby...', p. 714).
- ³⁹ Nela Samotyhowa, 'Wystawa prac uczniów państwowej szkoły przemysłu drzewnego w Zakopanem. Salon sztuki Cz. Garlińskiego', *Bluszcz*, no. 28 (1924), pp. 465–466.
- 40 Inv. no. DI 101121/83 MNW.
- 41 Inv. no. DI 101121/7 MNW.
- 42 X. [Józef] Strojnowski, 'Nasze szkoły zawodowe. Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem', Przewodnik Katolicki, no. 9 (1928), p. 7.
- 43 The documentation was made available to the author in 2016 by a private owner.
- Inv. nos DI 101121/101–102 MNW; see the photograph from Wojciech Brzega's studio in Strojnowski, 'Nasze szkoły zawodowe...', p. 7.
- 45 Inv. no. DI 101121/103 MNW.
- 46 Inv. no. DI 101121/14 MNW.
- ⁴⁷ Zakopane. Wyrzeźbione. Namalowane..., cat. no. 174, p. 214. In the catalogue, the

sculpture is dated to 1938, with M. Babyn stated as the author.

- ⁴⁸ Inv. no. DI 101121/122 MNW.
- ⁴⁹ Inv. no. DI 101121/19 MNW.
- ⁵⁰ Inv. no. DI 101121/88 MNW.
- ⁵¹ Inv. no. DI 101121/114 MNW.
 ⁵² Attributed after Hilary Majkowski, 'Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem', *Kurier Poznański*, no. 573 (1931), p. 3.
- 53 Inv. no. DI 101121/80 MNW.
- 54 Irena Szczygielska, 'Dawna i nowa sztuka podhalańska', Dziennik Poznański, no. 166 (1936), p. 2.
- 55 Legend was acquired for the State Art Collections and is currently kept at the National Museum in Warsaw, while Bend, which received a mention of honour at the Zacheta Salon, was acquired for the Bucharest royal collection after the TOSSPO (Society for the Propagation of Polish Art Abroad) exhibition in Bucharest.
- ⁵⁶ Inv. no. DI 101121/27 MNW.
- ⁵⁷ Inv. no. DI 101121/94 MNW.
- ⁵⁸ Piechal, 'Estetyka rzeźby...', p. 714.
- ⁵⁹ Inv. no. DI 101121/66 MNW.
- 60 Inv. no. DI 101121/3 MNW.
- ⁶¹ Jan Skłodowski, 'Olszowski Roman', in Słownik artystów polskich i obcych w Polsce działających, vol. 6 (Warsaw, 1993), pp. 282–283.
- E.g., Girl with a Hen (album no. 85; inv. no. DI 101121/87 MNW), Highlander's Wife (album no. 87; inv. no. DI 101121/89 MNW), Girl with a Cat (album no. 103; inv. no. DI 101121/111 MNW), Girl with a Dog (album no. 63; inv. no. DI 101121/65 MNW), Girl with a Ball (album no. 119; inv. no. DI 101121/127 MNW), Crowning of a Post (album no. 58; inv. no. DI 101121/60 MNW), Harmonica Player (album no. 65; inv. no. DI 101121/67 MNW), Juggler (album no. 60; inv. no. DI 101121/62 MNW), Actor (album no. 61; inv. no. DI 101121/63 MNW), Slave (album no. 62; inv. no. DI 101121/64 MNW).
- 63 Szczygielska, 'Dawna i nowa...', p. 3. Project drawings for decorative wooden items, such as pen holders, paper knives and walking stick handles, similar to those featured in the album, were also created by Brzega's

students. The sketches survive in private collections.

64 Album nos 56 and 102, inv.
 nos DI 101121/57–58 and DI
 101121/104–110 MNW.

 ⁶⁵ Hilary Majkowski, 'Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem', Kurier Poznański, no. 573 (1931), p. 3; id., 'Państw. Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem', Barwa i Rysunek, no. 7 (1930), pp. 3–4.

- 66 Majkowski, 'Państwowa Szkoła…', p. 3.
- ⁶⁷ Szczygielska, 'Dawna i nowa…', p. 2.
- 68 Ibid.
- ⁶⁹ Piechal, 'Estetyka rzeźby...', p. 713.
- ⁷⁰ Kenarowa, Od zakopiańskiej..., p. 193.
- T1 Brzega, Żywot górala..., p. 100.
- 72 Valuable information for dating and determining the production sequence of a given piece within a specific school year is provided by the inventory number, handwritten on the underside of the sculpture's base (though not always preserved).
- Both objects were shown in 2017 during the Warsaw–Zakopane Connection exhibition.
 See Relacja Warszawa–Zakopane, with texts by Agnieszka Morawińska, Anna Wende-Surmiak, Katarzyna Kucharska-Hornung, exh. cat., National Museum in Warsaw; Dr Tytus Chałubiński Tatra Museum in Zakopane, 2017–2018 (Warsaw, 2017), pp. 112, 113. Subsequent objects appear on the antiquarian market and are acquired for private collections. See also Zakopane. Wyrzeźbione..., cat. no. 100, p. 134; Zakopane, Zakopane, słońce..., cat. no. 47.
- ⁷⁴ Inv. no. DI 101121/89 MNW.
- ⁷⁵ See fig. in Relacja Warszawa–Zakopane..., pp. 106–107.
- 76 Malinowski, 'Szkoła rzeźby...', pp. 543–544.
- Zakopane. Wyrzeźbione.., cat. no. 84, p. 119.
- ⁷⁸ Inv. no. DI 101121/84 MNW.
- ⁷⁹ Inv. no. DI 101121/91 MNW.
- ⁸⁰ 'Czciciele kapliczek przydrożnych', Myśl Polska, no. 20 (66) (1938), p. 6; Rzeczy Piękne, no. 1 (1927), p. 4. The polychrome version of the object (the practice of polychroming PSPD sculptures emerged in the 1930s) is kept at the Tatra Museum in Zakopane.

- 81 E.g., Highlander Dance Zbójnicki Dance, Hunter – Highwayman, Zosia – Harvester, Group – Architectural Sculpture.
- ⁸² Inv. no. DI 101121/76 MNW.
- ⁸³ The award was won by Major Leszek Nycz-Lubicz and the sculpture is now kept at the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw. It was the first prize in slalom at the Skiing Championships organized by the Association of Military Sports Clubs in 1939, most likely held in Zakopane as a side event to the World Ski Championships, which took place from 11 to 19 February 1939. I would like to thank Aleksandra Liberacka from the Museum of Sport and Tourism in Warsaw for providing information on the history of this object. See fig.: Relacja Warszawa– Zakopane..., p. 104.
- ⁸⁴ Piotr Miszewski, 'Sierpniowa wystawa artystycznego przemysłu podhalańskiego w Zakopanem', Głos Zakopiański, no. 4 (1923), p. 3; Władysław Skoczylas, 'Wystawa podhalańskiego przemysłu artystycznego w Zakopanem', Pani, nos 9–10 (1923), p. 44.
- ⁸⁵ See the account of a.b.c. [Karol Kwaśniewski],
 'Sztuka zakopiańska w Warszawie', Głos
 Zakopiański, nos 21 and 22 (1924), pp. 1–2.
- 86 Warchałowski, Polska sztuka dekoracyjna...,
 p. 31.
- ⁸⁷ Kenarowa, Od zαkopiαńskiej..., p. 232.
- 88 (w), 'Madonny Stryjeńskiego', *Pani*, nos 8–9 (1924), p. 42.

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- Państwowa Szkoła Przemysłu Drzewnego w Zakopanem. Sprawozdanie z roku szkolnego 1925/1926 (Zakopane, [1926]).
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