

I Madrid at the Crossroads of 1918. Polish Avant-Garde Art

The beginnings of Spanish avant-garde art in the first decades of the 20th century were episodic and coincided with the First World War. Barcelona, Madrid and Bilbao were the main centres of modernism and avant-garde, and the specific character of each city determined their individual development. Barcelona soon became the leader, due to its proximity to Paris, its cultural identity defined, among others, by *noucentisme*, the emergence of new artistic groups and opening of private galleries, which resulted in the growth of the art market. Against this background, the capital of Spain lacked almost everything. However, it soon managed to overcome these insufficiencies thanks to such artistic initiatives as the Ultraist movement and the Society of Iberian Artists.

The year 1914 witnessed a breakthrough in Spanish art, with the arrival on the Iberian Peninsula of many foreign intellectuals, writers and artists – including Polish painters. The wave of emigration from Europe and from overseas caused by the outbreak of the First World War headed predominantly to Madrid or Barcelona. Pascal Rousseau recently observed that Spain, due to its neutrality, was able to receive important avant-garde artists – this became an “unprecedented chance for Barcelona, its cultural and civilizational aspirations, in a Europe wrecked by the moral and demographic hecatomb that played out in the trenches.”¹ In my opinion, the above also pertains to Madrid, which welcomed such painters as Diego Rivera, Celso Lagar, Rafael Barradas, Norah Borges, the married French couple Robert and Sonia Delaunay,² as well as a group of Polish artists; many of them contributed to the development of Ultraism – a movement that established a connection with the most innovative artistic trends in Europe and Latin America.

However, in view of Spain’s neutrality, it is necessary to emphasize one important factor: the political involvement of some of the avant-garde artists who came from war-stricken countries, such as Germany, France, Russia or Italy, among others – writers, sculptors, poets and musicians who personally experienced the horror of the battlefield. The catalogue of the exhibition *1914! La vanguardia y la Gran Guerra* [1914! The avant-garde and the Great War]

¹ Pascal Rousseau, “Barcelona Zona Neutral, 1914–1918,” in *Exilio de las Ramblas. Las vanguardias francesas en Barcelona durante la Primera Guerra Mundial*, exh. cat., Fundació Joan Miró, Fundación BBVA, 2014–15 (Barcelona, 2014), pp. 175–81.

² See Isabel García García, *Orígenes de las vanguardias artísticas en Madrid (1909–1922)* (Córdoba: Fundación Provincial de Artes Plásticas Rafael Botí, Diputación de Córdoba, 2004).

curated by Javier Arnaldo illustrates the form and extent of the influence of the military conflict on the development of avant-garde art.³

Apart from draughtsmen who worked for influential media and identified with their political orientation, articles on war and art or journals specifically devoted to war, such as, for instance, *Aliados* (1918), it may be stated that the Great War in Spain did not have such an impact on art as it had in other countries. However, one ought to suggest several interesting examples of taking up this subject, such as Daniel Vázquez Díaz's drawings depicting the armed conflict, created on the front lines of Reims, Verdun and Arras,⁴ the great group exhibition in the Montijo Palace in Madrid, involving Spanish and foreign artists who expressed their support for Spanish Legionaries fighting on the front line,⁵ individual works of art related to the First World War (such as the works of Dutch artist Louis Raemaekers), or, last but not least, the exhibition of Belgian art.⁶

The artists most often employed academic and realistic language, at times leaning towards caricature, and only seldom referring to avant-garde styles, such as Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism or abstractionism. An interesting exception to this rule is *Raid-Guynemer-Somme Alsace* (1917) by Celso Lagar from Salamanca – an example of Planism and a tribute to Catalan poet Josep Maria Junoy and his famous calligram *Oda a Guynemer* [Ode to Guynemer], which describes the shooting down of this French fighter ace's aeroplane.⁷

Events representing a particular relationship between art and politics remain shrouded in obscurity. In 1917, when Spain was going through one of its greatest political crises, which manifested itself, among others, in a general strike, Dutch painter Bettina Jacometti was accused of sending encrypted information to Germans through her symbolical drawings.⁸ The Delaunays experienced a similar situation in Portugal, when letters written in German were found in their luggage. The government of the country which had just joined the war accused them of espionage. This latter case concerns Polish artists and is discussed below.

Polish Spies in the Spanish Capital

After the outbreak of the First World War, Spain immediately declared neutrality, as a result of the extremely difficult internal situation in the country. Conservatives supported the Central Powers which advocated an imperialist and militarized Europe, and liberals – together with Socialists and Republicans – backed the Triple Entente.

The public opinion, including the most prominent Spanish intellectuals, was also divided between the Germanophiles and supporters of the Entente. Contemporary press fanned the ideological conflict, which caused embassies of countries which participated in the armed struggle to constantly lodge complaints with the Spanish Ministry of State (the present

³ See Javier Arnaldo, *1914! La vanguardia y la Gran Guerra*, exh. cat., Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Fundación Caja Madrid, 2008–9 (Madrid, 2008).

⁴ Isabel García García, "Asomarse al caleidoscopio. Vázquez Díaz entre 1914 y 1924," in *Daniel Vázquez Díaz (1882–1969)*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid, Museo de Bellas Artes de Bilbao, 2005 (Bilbao, 2005), pp. 24–25.

⁵ Ead., *Orígenes de las vanguardias...*, op. cit., pp. 265–89.

⁶ Ibid., pp. 270–73.

⁷ Isabel García García, *Celso Lagar* (Madrid: Fundación Mapfre, Instituto de Cultura, 2010), pp. 43–46.

⁸ Ead., *Orígenes de las vanguardias...*, op. cit., p. 201.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs). In Spain, despite its formal neutrality, the war was ever-present on the front pages of newspapers and magazines.

I do not intend to provide a detailed analysis of these complex issues here; instead, I shall focus solely on the questions concerning Polish avant-garde artists staying in Madrid. The course of the First World War created favourable conditions for countries subordinate to the major European powers to regain independence. One of them was Poland.⁹ In May 1919, Spain recognized the newly-formed Polish Republic and supported the creation of an army on its territories.¹⁰ In the preceding period, a group of Polish artists became the protagonists of certain cultural and political events. Not only did they display their extremely avant-garde works in Madrid, but they also maintained secret political contacts with supporters of the Entente and Germanophiles alike. The formation of the Polish National Committee in Paris in 1917 sparked the creation of subsequent committees in allied or neutral countries. Members of the Committee approached the Spanish Ambassador in Paris, asking him to recognize a new Polish organization on Spanish territory and permit the activity of an official representative who would look after the economic and political interests of Poles living there.¹¹

One of the first agreements concerned the creation of a Polish Committee, the composition of which proved very diverse: apart from members of nobility, it included several avant-garde artists living in Madrid. The Polish community was a recognizable one in the capital, whose friends included the French consul Marius André, whose wife was Polish, as well as Czech diplomat Josef Šindler whose wife, Czech painter Milada Šindlerová,¹² had an exhibition at the Ateneo in 1917.

“It is my honour to inform Your Excellency that a new Committee has been founded in Madrid, in concert with the Polish National Committee in Paris, and that it is composed of the following members: count Dziedzicki [sic] and countess Dzieduski [sic], residing at 14 Marqués de Riscal street; José Pangaiviez [sic] residing at 10 Españolito street; Mariano Paszkiewicz [sic] and Wenceslao Zawalosky [sic] residing at 4 Oviedo street”.¹³ Spelling mistakes aside, the document concerned art critic Marjan Paszkiewicz, painters Józef Pankiewicz and Jan Wacław Zawadowski, and count Aleksander Dzieduszycki, military attaché at the Austro-Hungarian

⁹ Support for Poland, mostly in the humanitarian sense, was manifested in Madrid in the form of announcements, such as that published in the newspaper *La Correspondencia de España* of 27 March 1915. Writers also commented on Poland's troubled political situation, for instance Rafael Cansinos-Assens in “La desgraciada Polonia. Mensaje de simpatía,” *La Correspondencia de España* (Madrid, 10 February 1916). Even some cartoonists took up this political issue, e.g., Herman-Paul in his print *La autonomía de Polonia* published in the magazine *España* (Madrid, 11 January 1917).

¹⁰ s.n., “España y Polonia,” *El Sol* (Madrid, 23 May 1919).

¹¹ On the one hand, this had an influence on the protection of the estate of Archduke Charles Stephen, brother of queen Maria Cristina (which was situated in Poland), and on the other, on the commercial relations between Poland and Spain, the export of fruit, oil and wine. See National Historical Archive, Madrid, note of the Ministry of State, n.d., fol. H 2605.

¹² Emilio Quintana, “Pięć listów Wacława Zawadowskiego do Stanisława Jaworskiego,” in *Papież awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper w Hiszpanii, Polsce, Europie* (Warsaw: The National Museum in Warsaw, 2015), p. 138. See also the Spanish edition of the catalogue – *Tadeusz Peiper. Heraldo de la vanguardia entre España y Polonia* (Warsaw, 2015), p. 141 [in the further part of the article, references to the Spanish version of the catalogue have been simplified – editor's note].

¹³ National Historical Archive, Madrid, undersecretary J. Lladó's letter to H.E. Minister of State of 19 January 1919, fol. H 2605.

embassy, who had lived in Madrid for many years.¹⁴ Because of his diplomatic talents,¹⁵ the new Prime Minister of the Polish Republic, Ignacy Jan Paderewski, appointed him president of the aforementioned committee and entrusted him with the mission of convincing Spain to recognize Poland as an independent state.

It is also believed that during his stay in Spain Dzie duszycki might have been one of the originators of the idea of founding the Polish Press Agency in Madrid in mid-1918. Apart from him, these were: Eugeniusz Frankowski, assistant professor at the Anthropometric Institute of the Jagiellonian University, frequent participant in meetings of Polish artists,¹⁶ author of the lecture *Polonia y su misión en Europa* [Poland and its mission in Europe], published in 1919,¹⁷ Zdzisław Milner, professor at the French College in Madrid, and painter Józef Pankiewicz, professor at the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts and translator at the Austro-Hungarian embassy.¹⁸ Several Madrid-based daily newspapers reported the establishment of the Agency and published a letter from its founders, informing about Polish issues¹⁹ – the main focus concerned counteracting negative German propaganda, which disseminated information about pogroms of Jews organized by the Polish population.²⁰ At the same time, count Dzie duszycki became one of the founders of Fundusz Dobrej Woli [Good Will Fund], a Polish charity society.²¹ One might venture a hypothesis that the group which formed the new Polish press agency also included Dzie duszycki's friend and compatriot Tadeusz Peiper, who had just begun his career as a journalist in Madrid, writing about the events in Poland and political developments in Europe in daily newspapers such as *El Sol*, *La Lectura*, *España* or the Catalan *La Publicidad*.²²

Such were the circumstances in which the Spanish Ministry of State began to review the newly established committee. Count Dzie duszycki, the official representative of Poland, a man

¹⁴ Dzie duszycki came from an important family of Galician aristocrats (Galicia is a territory encompassing today's south-eastern Poland, south-western Ukraine plus parts of northern Slovakia and the Czech Republic). In 1914 he was appointed Austro-Hungarian military attaché to Madrid, and remained in the post until his appointment as Poland's representative in Madrid – National Historical Archive, Madrid, encrypted telegram no. 292 from the Ambassador of Spain to the Minister of State, 8 March 1919, fol. H 2605.

¹⁵ As testified, e.g., by several pieces of news published in the press: s.n., "Notas deportivas," ABC (Madrid, 12 June 1915); s.n., "La Familia Real," ABC (Madrid, 9 January 1917) or s.n., "De sociedad," ABC (Madrid, 23 April 1918).

¹⁶ Painter J.W. Zawadowski recalls them as follows: "When we met at the terrace of the café on Paseo de la Castellana, André was always there, and so was the painter Delaunay, Pankiewicz and wife, Jahl and wife. M. Paszkiewicz, the archaeologist Frankowski." As cited in: Quintana, "Pięć listów Wacława Zawadowskiego...", op. cit., p. 141. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – p. 143.

¹⁷ Eugeniusz Frankowski, *Polonia y su misión en Europa* (Madrid: Imprenta del Patronato de Huérfanos de Intendencia e Intervención Militar, 1919).

¹⁸ Monika Poliwka, "Polacy a ultraizm," in *Papież awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper...*, op. cit., p. 78. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – pp. 112–38.

¹⁹ s.n., "España y Polonia," *Heraldo Militar* (Madrid, 19 December 1918).

²⁰ See Małgorzata Nalewajko, "Episodios judíos en la imagen mutua de España y Polonia" [online], *Itinerarios, Revista de estudios lingüísticos, literarios, históricos y antropólogos de la Universidad de Varsovia*, vol. 16 (2012) [retrieved: 7 September 2015], pp. 181–200, at: <http://itinerarios.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/12_Itin-16_2012_Nalewajko.pdf>.

²¹ Other members included Joaquín Fajans, manager of La Casa Dun & Co (Agencia de Informes del comercio internacional), Alberto Kowalski, head of Ferrocarriles del Norte and Adam Jureczko, official of the Polish Legation in Madrid. S.n., "Noticias," *El Sol* (Madrid, 27 May 1919).

²² See Beata Lentas, "Hiszpańska publicystyka Tadeusz Peipera," in *Papież awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper...*, op. cit., pp. 110–35. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – pp. 112–38.

with unclear political past and orientation, was accused of working for French secret services and maintaining contacts with German and other spies, which could jeopardize Spain's neutrality. Piotr Rypson's new research has demonstrated that several Polish artists, including Jan Waclaw Zawadowski and Władysław Jahl, had already been accused of espionage beforehand, and arrested in the French city of Nîmes.²³ Here it should be pointed out that because France participated in the First World War, most persons carrying an Austro-Hungarian passport, including Poles, were forced to leave the country.

The General Directorate of Security immediately ordered the observation of the whole group, finding its members to be: "[...] incendiary element [...] acting as spies for both Germany and France; the aforementioned aristocrats offered their services to the latter, only proving their villainy, which could pose a threat to Spain, because, being destitute, they would not hesitate to humiliate themselves politically before the party which offers them money. Therefore, the General Directorate believes that the aforementioned foreigners do not deserve to have their stay in Spain extended, and hereby suggests that they should be expelled from the Kingdom, should Your Excellency find it expedient [...]"²⁴ (fig. 1 a–c). In spite of the suspicion of espionage, the members of the new Polish Committee – subjected to constant police surveillance and ordered to leave Spain – began their activity²⁵ (fig. 2). Meanwhile, just a few months earlier, the courtyard of the Ministry of State saw the first exhibition of Polish painters, some of whom would go on to become members of the Committee: Józef Pankiewicz, his wife Wanda, Władysław Jahl, and Jan Waclaw Zawadowski.

This event raises many questions – how was it possible to organize an exhibition in a place of such political importance, reserved for young holders of government scholarships, who were later sent to Rome? How did it come to pass that such avant-garde works were accepted in such an official location? Many of those questions will probably have to remain unanswered for now. Still, I would like to propose a hypothesis: Alfonso XIII's alleged neutrality, which remained a widely discussed subject during the war, merely served to fan the conflict between the political parties. It is relatively easy to establish a connection between the exhibition and a certain political event that was very important for Poland: on 5 November 1916 the German emperor Wilhelm II sent an act to the Austrian emperor Franz Joseph I, proclaiming the establishment of the Kingdom of Poland as an independent hereditary monarchy. The document was submitted to Charles Stephen Habsburg,²⁶ candidate to become the regent and future king of Poland.

Why would one question an exhibition of Polish artists at the seat of the Ministry of State in view of the urgency of establishing new relations between Spain and Poland? Poland's political situation was still unstable, though, and when the situation changed again, members of the future Polish Committee became personae non gratae in the Kingdom of Spain.

²³ Piotr Rypson, "Tworzyć siebie z siebie. Tadeusz Peiper wyrusza w świat," in *Papież awangardy. Tadeusz Peiper...*, op. cit., p. 28. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – p. 30.

²⁴ National Historical Archive, Madrid, undersecretary J. Lladó's letter to H.E. Minister of State of 19 January 1919, fol. H 2605.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Maria Christina's younger brother was the heir of his uncle, Albrecht Friedrich Rudolf von Österreich-Teschen, who raised and adopted him, as he had no son of his own. In 1918 he assumed Polish citizenship and lived in Poland until his death in 1933. He owned Saysbusch (now Żywiec in the south of Poland), several villages and castles, a famous brewery and ca. 40,000 ha of arable land and forests.

The Controversial Exhibition at the Ministry of State

The influx of foreign artists to the Iberian Peninsula largely contributed to the revival and development of Spanish art. In Madrid, the activity of Polish painters set the directions for avant-garde art of the 1920s – not only their works, but also Marjan Paszkiewicz's publications on art, which explained certain ideas of the European avant-garde to Madrilenian experts. Basque critic Juan de la Encina remembered the significance of Polish artists in Madrid as late as in 1935: "The influence of the Polish group, which was established in that period in the capital of Spain, was not squandered; it was a ferment that influenced Spanish painters and writers. Marjan Paszkiewicz, the advocate of new trends, wrote articles and gave lectures at the Ateneo, propagating ideas and artistic attitudes popular in Paris during that period."²⁷

The public presentation of the Polish painting manifesto, written by Paszkiewicz for the catalogue of the exhibition *Exposición de los pintores polacos* which took place in April 1918 at the seat of the Ministry of State (**fig. 3**) – today, this building belongs to the complex of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation – revealed one of the characteristic features of the Spanish avant-garde: an extreme mixture of notions used and a specific relationship that emerged among the artists, professional critics, audience and press.

One year earlier, in May 1917, Spanish-American journal *Cervantes* published an interesting essay titled *Hacia la unidad plástica* [Towards a unity of the fine arts], also penned by Paszkiewicz. It contained the most important ideas which the author later, in 1918, included in the introduction to the aforementioned exhibition catalogue. In this essay of more than ten pages, he discussed the creative process of a painting, viewed through the relationship between substance and form; the meaning and expression achieved through lines or patches of colour, and finally the unity of colour and form. Naturally, he emphasized the ideas he had assimilated in Paris before coming to Spain. The essay began with Cubist construction schemes, first used by Cézanne in the late 19th century. Thanks to him, claimed the author, Cubist painters were able to conduct a "calculative analysis of the visual values of objects, demonstrated in linear diagrams,"²⁸ in order to achieve the Cubist fourth dimension, and later pass on to analytic divisionism of form, even though their path to abstract art was supposed to separate expression and meaning from form itself.

Form, colour and abstraction had already been the backbone of avant-garde movements, such as synchromism, founded by Americans Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Morgan Russell and first presented in Paris in the Salon of the Independents (1913). Their theories were based on research in optics conducted by Chevreul, Charles Henry and David Sulzer, concurrently with Georges Seurat's and Paul Signac's experiments, and on the Orphist Movement, represented by Frenchman Robert Delaunay, whom Paszkiewicz knew personally. In the aforementioned introduction to the catalogue, he wrote (**fig. 4**): "Today, the cult of the formal aspect, the solely visual expression of painting, unites various artistic trends into one style, which depicts the visual beauty of our times. The attempt at creating a new perspective and abstract stylization of the natural, the purification of colour in the sense of its particular meaning, or just the colouristic evocation of form – ultimately, these are all efforts to liberate

²⁷ Ángel Vegue y Goldoni, "Exposición de grabados polacos modernos," *La Voz* (Madrid, 7 May 1935).

²⁸ Mariano Paszkiewicz, "De arte pictórico. Hacia la unidad plástica," *Cervantes* (Madrid, May 1917), p. 58.

painting from its false mission of telling a story, of reconstructing and recreating [...]. The dissonance of the representation of form, always hiding between line and colour, is conquered by the possibility to express form as the result of the relationship between colours; on the other hand, negating this particular value of colour brings back its entire abstract sonority [...].”²⁹

The essay from 1917 and the 1918 prologue – after Ramón Gómez de la Serna published the first Futurist manifestos in Spain (in 1901 and 1910) in *Prometeo* – served as a new critical input in the development of the avant-garde in Madrid. There remains, however, another question: what is the connection of these early texts with the newly formed Polish Formism (which dates to 1918)? Szymon Syrkus defined the new movement as: “The breaking of an artwork into elements, BUILDING images out of them, so that each element depends on the whole, and the whole on each element, the search for CONSTRUCTION and FORM, shaped consciously according to a certain spatio-artistic perspective, instead of the painstaking devotion to the recreation of an ACCIDENTAL element of nature.”³⁰

The analysis of this text allows to establish a certain connection with Paszkiewicz’s writings, but it remains difficult to confirm the nature of the relationship between the theoretician of Ultraism and the main proponents of Formism. Artistic journeys aided the exchange of ideas, as a result of which the new movements, despite their differences, shared the same spirit, born during creative meetings at the epicentre of the Parisian avant-garde, from where it emanated further, enabling the creation of similar avant-garde movements in peripheral countries. The spread of the European avant-garde is a good illustration of this process, and also explains Paszkiewicz’s ties with Formism. This might also be one of the reasons why the elderly Jan Wacław Zawadowski noted that Paszkiewicz spared no effort to describe the painting process – one, it has to be added, based on the “cult of the form,” like in the case of the Formists – the effects of which he presented for the first time in the courtyard of the Ministry of the State: “[...] he was searching for a new form in painting and, of course, for a system, which ultimately, despite the huge official exhibition, fell into oblivion.”³¹

Obviously, the exhibition did not escape the criticism of Madrid reviewers, who called it, maybe due to the difficult language employed in the catalogue, an attempt at creating a pure painting with philosophical goals derived, among others, from Impressionist and synchromist methods. In that sense no contact with Polish Formism was ever established. For example, a reviewer of *Heraldo de Madrid*, José Blanco Coris, complained that it took a lot of effort to “see the entire modernist and philosophical expression in paintings by Polish artists and... to no avail; we couldn’t find the rhythm of the surface, to the maximum of its visual life, in any of the manifestation of decorative art, because we do not think that a representation of a tomato

²⁹ Mariano Paszkiewicz, *Exposición de los pintores polacos*, exh. cat., Courtyard of the Ministry of State, Madrid, 5–21 April 1918; José Francés, “Una exposición de pintores polacos,” *El Año Artístico*, (Madrid, 1918), pp. 117–18; Francisco Alcántara, “Exposición de los pintores polacos, Sus obras y su programa. En el Ministerio de Estado,” *El Sol* (Madrid, 14 April 1918).

³⁰ As cited in: Szymon Syrkus, “Początki i rozwój współpracy mojej z malarzami,” *Głos Plastyków*, no. 8–12, Ann. 5 (1938), pp. 33–34. His associations with the Spanish Ultraism were analysed by Inés R. Artola; see Inés R. Artola, “¿Qué fue el formismo polaco (1917–1922) según los formistas?” [online], *Semiosfera*, no. 2 (2014), pp. 101–2 [retrieved: 1 September 2015], at: <www.ucm.es/semiosfera> and *Formisci: la síntesis de la modernidad (1917–1922)* (Granada, 2015).

³¹ Quintana, “Pięć listów Wacława Zawadowskiego...,” op. cit., p. 145. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – p. 147.

using an oval shape filled with flat red paint with a green dot in the centre was a characteristic feature of post-Impressionism, or a logical representation of a visual synthesis.”³²

A similar opinion was voiced by Ballesteros de Martos, who observed that he did not understand avant-garde theories, which were solely capable of inducing extreme reactions, such as laughter or anger, or the distinctive terminology of Spanish avant-garde, such as the names adopted by the most innovative artistic groups: radicals, ultraradicals, snobs, *tomapelistas*,³³ the extravagant ones, Spartacists,³⁴ Bolsheviks, Anarchists, revolutionaries, ultramodernists, etc. “[...] They speak to us *only* about mental torture, forced and acute cerebrations... which lead them to the destruction of art, and therefore a negation and obliteration of everything that came before. They destroy, but offer nothing new... they formulate theories, create a doctrine, negate everything that came before them, but when – thirsty for new rules and unknown canons – we approach their art, this ‘new art,’ which is defended solely by a few unhinged people considering themselves Anarchists and boasting about being the restorers of art – because they can lay claim to nothing else – we see that it is all nothing but madness, disturbance, an untreatable disease of sensitivity and thought, which may lead to nothing but death or nothingness.”³⁵

As far as Ballesteros de Martos is concerned, the catastrophe of art resulted from a lack of creativity; other critics, including José María Salaverría, believed that it dated back to the 18th-century democratic values: political, religious and cultural freedom. In this way, art, liberated from other disciplines, reached a new aesthetics in forms and chromatic scales, to which Marjan Paszkiewicz’s introduction also referred.³⁶

What was the significance of this exhibition for the artistic community of Madrid? First of all, the space which hosted it was an official place *par excellence*, which was symbolized by the National Exhibitions of the Fine Arts organized there since mid-19th century. These displays determined the approved taste, which preferred figurativeness, narrativity, and regionalism. This was safeguarded by institutions such as the San Fernando Academy of Fine Arts and the Royal Museum of Painting and Sculpture, currently known as the Prado Museum. What reigned was traditional art, referring to 19th-century neoclassicism, naturalism, luminism and the *préciosité* style, as well as such movements as symbolism, Impressionism and post-Impressionism.

The works of Polish artists inspired considerable interest among the Madrid art critics, as it was one of the first exhibitions of foreign avant-garde painting, referred to as *pintura modernísima* [ultramodern painting],³⁷ *snobista* [snobbish] and *anarquista* [anarchistic].³⁸ According to the most conservative critics, this would lead to the end of all art.³⁹ Francisco Pompey, reviewer for the *La Nación* daily, wrote: “The art of the Poles is the most innovative that the Madrid public has ever seen. It may well be that many will ridicule this Exhibition, but some will reflect deeply on it. I do not mean that our art ‘should follow’ that path. We do not need such models and should not adopt the character of painting originating abroad... But

³² José Blanco Coris, “Exposición de los pintores polacos,” *Heraldo de Madrid* (Madrid, 7 April 1918).

³³ Neologism derived from the Spanish expression *tomar el pelo* – ‘to pull someone’s leg’ [translator’s note].

³⁴ Members of the Spartacus League, a German Marxist revolutionary movement [translator’s note].

³⁵ Antonio Ballesteros de Martos, “Los pintores polacos,” *Cervantes* (Madrid, May 1918), p. 124.

³⁶ José María Salaverría, “La pintura nihilista,” *ABC* (Madrid, 18 April 1918).

³⁷ Francés, op. cit.

³⁸ Salaverría, op. cit.

³⁹ Ballesteros de Martos, *Los pintores polacos*, op. cit.

it would be a good thing to watch it with respect on account of the artistic culture we need in order to get rid of routine and commonness..."⁴⁰

Another thought-provoking aspect was equating the avant-garde with ugliness and pornography. José Francés, one of the most important and respected critics of the time, described Polish compositions as follows: "[...] they are truly ugly, devoid of taste, noble lines, or pleasant colour chords, these pseudo-infantile drawings, these dried spots of oil paint and tempera. Only a sensory and visual aberration can account for the pathological pleasure of deforming human bodies and defiling the purity of colours by a bitter lack of harmony and creating combinations that destroy it."⁴¹ Interestingly, as to the pornographic contents of the works, the new forms – which, according to some, were bordering on revolt – also brought about “shame that the public display of such indecency is permitted... As visiting the Exhibition is free, and the venue prestigious – after all, it is the courtyard of the Ministry... – it is filled with respectable ladies and fair maidens, who have to flee in disgust. To put in one word, it is abhorrent. We are convinced and telling it frankly that Mr Eduardo Dato, the incumbent Minister of State, a man of impeccable manners, has no idea that such paintings are exhibited in his own Ministry. Most likely he has never cared to step out into the courtyard where the exhibition has been installed. We appeal to him to do so, so that he might agree with us. And we also appeal to General Barrera, the esteemed General Director of Security, to undertake proper steps. This is not the case of going into groundless raptures, this is the case of ... modesty.”⁴²

Calling the Polish nudes pornographic, with the still vibrating echoes of the scandal at the 1915 National Exhibition of Fine Arts in Madrid caused by Federico Beltrán Masses' *La maja marquesa* [The beautiful marquise], which was described as “disgusting and morally offensive” and taken out of the competition – was yet another peculiarity and proof of the atmosphere in the capital. Allow me, though, to focus on Józef Paszkiewicz's painting *At the Dressing Table* (1915) (**fig. 5**), which clearly resembles Robert Delaunay's *Nu à la lecture* [Nude woman reading] (1915). Was it not that particular nude – depicting a female in a banal pose, with her back turned and a full figure, wearing high-heeled shoes and stockings rolled to the knees – that inspired so many appeals to Minister Eduardo Dato and the General Director of Security?

There were only a few positive reviews, the most important of which was probably the one by a Basque critic, Juan de la Encina, one of the defenders of new art in Spain. For him, the exhibition resembled a fragment of the Parisian *Salon d'Automne* or Munich's and Berlin's *Sezession*. He compared Polish painters to Spanish artists who also rhythmized colours and were exhibiting in Madrid, such as Anglad Camaras or Basque painters, such as Juan de Echeverría, who presented his still lifes in a Salon at the Ateneo. Juan de la Encina, expert in modern art, confirmed their connection to works of Cézanne and Synchronism.⁴³

In the face of such negative criticism it comes as no surprise that Polish artists hung copies of all reviews of their creations on the walls of the Ministry of State; the exhibition was a source

⁴⁰ Francisco Pompey, “Exposición de los pintores polacos,” *La Nación* (Madrid, 14 April 1918).

⁴¹ Francés, op. cit.

⁴² Alberto de Segovia, “Los hombres y los días,” *La Acción* (Madrid, 8 April 1918).

⁴³ Juan de la Encina, “Los pintores polacos,” *España* (Madrid, 25 April 1918).

of tremendous frustration among them: "Since our last presentation in the courtyard of the Ministry of State in Madrid, we have started experiencing a sort of anxiety of exhibitions."⁴⁴

What was displayed in the former Santa Cruz Palace, the seat of the Ministry of State? What types of images gave rise to reviews claiming the death of art, hideousness, and pornography? Over a hundred works were placed there, but press reports of the time referred to the following ones: interest in the creations of Józef Pankiewicz encompassed vases, still lifes, street views, drawings of nudes, and particular works such as *Azotea* [Terrace], *Pinos* [Pines], *Paisajes de San Rafael* [Landscape of San Rafael], *Flores* [Flowers], *Still life*. From among works by his wife Wanda, remarks were made on tapestries and *Paisaje* [Landscape], *Cesta de fruta* [Basket with fruit], *Nature morte* [Still life], and *Paisaje y fruta* [Landscape and fruit]. Mentions were made of such works by Władysław Jahl as *La Dama en bermellón* [Lady in cinnabar], *El balcón* [The balcony], *Tres hombres* [Three men], *Excursión* [Excursion], *Composiciones figurales* [Figural compositions], *Autoretrato* [Self-portrait], *Puesto de fruta* [Fruit stand] and *Nature morte* [Still life]. Jan Wacław Zawadowski impressed critics with works such as *Bodegón de agujas de mar y cebolletas* [Still life with pipefish and chives], *Composición* [Composition], and *Retrato del Sr. M. P.* [Portrait of Mr M.P.]. This list has been retrieved as a result of a painstaking, near archaeological search. Not long ago, during the preparation of the exhibition on Tadeusz Peiper at the National Museum in Warsaw, it was supplemented with new works.

Let us begin with Józef Pankiewicz. For a short time, this professor of the Krakow Academy of Fine Arts was an active member of the Polish avant-garde. His studies undertaken in Paris provided him with the opportunity to become familiar with the work of the Impressionists, particularly that of Renoir (as indicated by Manuel Bonet),⁴⁵ and the post-Impressionists. Before coming to Madrid in 1912 – after the exhibition of Cubist art in the Catalanian Galerías Dalmau, which was the subject of widespread interest in the press – he participated in the first exhibition of Polish art, which was given the subtitle of *A group of Polish artists residing in Paris*. His stay in Madrid produced a number of emblematic works featured in the catalogue of the 1996 exhibition *Ultraísmo y las artes plásticas* [Ultraism and the visual arts] curated by Juan Manuel Bonet: *On the Balcony* (1914–19) (**fig. 6**), presently on display at the Muzeum Sztuki in Łódź, and *A Street in Madrid* (1916) (**fig. 7**) from the National Museum in Warsaw. The latter of the paintings may be identified as piece number 45, *Una calle* [Street], from the 1918 catalogue.

To this list of works we may now add *A Terrace in Madrid* (1917) (**fig. 8**), with the same panoramic view as *On the Balcony* (1914–19). It may be assumed that this was work number 61 titled *Vista desde mi azotea* [View from my terrace] from the 1918 catalogue. It is difficult to determine where they were painted, as the artist first lived on 20 Virgen de los Peligros Street, and later on 10 Españolito Street. With respect to *Houses in Madrid* (1915) (**fig. 9**), this may relate to work no. 73, *Plaza de Bilbao* [Bilbao Square], which is reminiscent of the view presented on old postcards presenting the Bilbao Roundabout (**fig. 10**) in the first and second decades of the 19th century together with a characteristic boulevard sporting trees. The exhibition included four compositions presenting a mountainous landscape in the Madrid region, specifically that of San Rafael (numbers 41 to 44); doubtlessly, one of them is the *Landscape of San Rafael* (1915)

⁴⁴ Enrabiri, "Dos revolucionarios de la pintura pasan por Bilbao," *La Tarde* (Bilbao, 5 August 1918).

⁴⁵ Juan Manuel Bonet, *Diccionario de las vanguardias en España (1907–1936)* (Madrid, 1995), p. 464.

(fig. 11). Lastly – apart from the drawing reproduced in the catalogue (fig. 12) – one of more than ten still lifes presented by Pankiewicz must have been that of 1916–18 (fig. 13).

The majority of these works became the subject of a thorough analysis by the critics of Madrid. For example, Juan de la Encina declared Pankiewicz to be a fanatic Cézannist employing energetic chromatic ranges.⁴⁶ This was not an isolated view, as other critics, like Ángel Vegue y Goldoni and Francisco Pompey, emphasized the musicality of his chromatic rhythms, while José Francés, director of *El Año Artístico*, made a mention of the simplicity of his palette.

The matter of his wife, Wanda Pankiewicz, was something entirely different; her collection of tapestries – despite its stylistic similarity to the work of her husband, expressed in simplicity of form and chromatic gradation – made a tremendous impression on the critics, according to some of whom it was the sole example of “serious painting” on display in the courtyard of the Ministry of State. The aforementioned José Francés pointed out the clear links between these tapestries and the decorative art of the Iberian Peninsula, suggesting that they belonged in the Museum of Decorative Arts: “her tapestries are truly things of beauty, tastefully done and possessed of an incontrovertible decorative richness. Pieces by Mrs. Pankiewicz are of great interest. It would seem that painters and critics in Spain are finally beginning to grasp the significance of applied art [...]”⁴⁷ A similar opinion was held by the Basque critic Juan de la Encina, who emphasized their affinity with Spanish embroidery: “Mrs. Wanda Pankiewicz’s tapestries possess the chromatic charm of a garden full of flowers in full sunlight, the brilliance and expansiveness of Spanish folk textiles. This is not to say that they are similar, but that the impression they make is, in a certain sense, alike. Like her husband, she enjoys intense chromatic accents, but she is capable at times of creating a luscious harmony in intermediate tones and values [...]”⁴⁸

To date, no physical traces of those works have been found, but we are able to cite several known pieces of information about them. The catalogue from the 1918 exhibition contains a reproduction of one of the tapestries (fig. 14); a photograph of Wanda and Józef Pankiewicz taken in their Madrid studio (fig. 15) shows two other tapestries; finally, on Józef Pankiewicz’s painting *On the Balcony*, the model – most likely his wife – is sitting at the same table as in the previously mentioned photograph, and another interesting tapestry can be seen there. It should also be mentioned that in recent times there have been several publications of tapestry designs realized in Madrid⁴⁹ and stored at the National Museum in Warsaw which are attributed to Józef Pankiewicz.⁵⁰

The remaining members of the Polish group, Władysław Jahl and Jan Wacław Zawadowski, also presented compositions in the simultanist and synchromist veins, mainly steeped in Cézannist chromatic richness. The fates of these two painters are reminiscent of their previously mentioned colleagues – after the eruption of the First World War they stayed for a short time in Paris, and then moved to Spain.

⁴⁶ De la Encina, “Los pintores polacos,” op. cit.

⁴⁷ Francés, op. cit.

⁴⁸ De la Encina, “Los pintores polacos,” op. cit.

⁴⁹ *Papież awangardy...*, op. cit., pp. 190–91. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – pp. 194–95.

⁵⁰ It seems that the designs were made by Józef Pankiewicz, while the textiles themselves are the work of Wanda Pankiewicz [editor’s note].

The works presented by Władysław Jahl at the exhibition in the Ministry of State are unknown, with the exception of the sketch illustrating the introduction to the catalogue, itself reproduced on other occasions in publications of the Ultraists. We can now add to it the untitled watercolour on paper (**fig. 16**), once belonging to Vicent Huidobro.⁵¹ At the Ministry of State, Jahl presented two works under numbers 5 and 6, titled *Puesto de frutas* [Fruit stand]; the subject alone suggests that the watercolour could be one of them. Elements of the Delaunays' style were clearly evident in the work: the compositional solution, treatment of form and joyous colours display similarities to works of Sonia Delaunay, such as *La vendedora de naranjas* [Woman selling oranges] (1915), *Marché au Minho* [Market in Miño] (1915) (**fig. 17**), and particularly *Mercado de Portugal* [Market in Portugal] of 1915.

Finally we arrive at Jan Wacław Zawadowski, who displayed such works as *Retrato de Marian Paszkiewicz* [A portrait of Marian Paszkiewicz], with number 95. It is quite possible that this is the work presented in a recently published photograph (**fig. 18**).⁵² Included along with it should be the sketch illustrating the list of his works prepared for the exhibition at the Ministry (**fig. 19**).

In the press, as we know today, only two photographs of the exhibition were published: in the Madrid newspapers *La Nación* and *La Acción* (**figs 20, 21**). Taking a closer look at them, in the upper-left portion we can observe the outline of a woman's portrait – a half-length figure in a hat – which could be *Retrato de mujer* [Portrait of a woman] (c. 1914) (**fig. 22**), a picture titled *Dama exótica* [Exotic woman], appearing in the catalogue from 1918 under number 97.

These works were discussed by critics, who – failing to understand modern art – expressed displeasure at the simplification of forms, which came close to abstraction. Edelye directly accused the Polish painters in *El Liberal* of: “a few stains of cadmium on breasts passing for the entire palette, compositional absurdities and inexcusable arbitrariness when it comes to the matter of light... as the exalted ones say, with our quite limited knowledge about painting, a love of Cubism and ultra-Impressionist painting is only possible for those with exceptional culture, sensitivity and knowledge of art... we are outraged that painters of such prestige and talent as Władysław Jahl, Józef Pankiewicz and Wacław Zawadowski hold drawing in contempt, doing irreparable damage to the form, and are entirely indifferent to the human appearance of their figures, limiting themselves to creating chromatic compositions worthy of praise solely as works of decorative art [...]”⁵³

According to Ángel Vegue y Goldoni, the Polish artists adopted the expression of Cézanne's final artistic style (the highest level of synthesis reached by the French master): “Four lines of inexplicable diagrams, infantile sketches and a fanciful awkwardness of line and palette do absolutely nothing to attract one to modern art. If it seemed to us to be theoretically acceptable, these examples would be sufficient to ridicule it entirely.”⁵⁴ José Francés also pointed out various influences in his chronicle – from the painting of Cézanne to the graphical compositions of Jules Laforgue. Other critics invoked such French painters as Matisse and Rousseau.

⁵¹ *Papież awangardy...*, op. cit., p. 84.

⁵² *Papież awangardy...*, op. cit., p. 91. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – p. 93.

⁵³ Edelye, “La Exposición de artistas polacos,” *El Liberal* (Madrid, 10 April 1918).

⁵⁴ Ángel Vegue y Goldoni, “Exposición de los pintores polacos,” *El Imparcial* (Madrid, 3 May 1918).

This artistic episode from April 1918 ended with the closing of the exhibition. There are several other known reviews, such as those relating to the arrival of the Pankiewicz family in the Basque cities of Bilbao and San Sebastián with the intention of arranging some sort of an exhibition following the disaster in Madrid.⁵⁵ A short time later other members of the Polish group, such as Marjan Paszkiewicz and Władysław Jahl, joined the newly-born Ultraist movement⁵⁶. Already at the end of 1918 in the *Perspectivas* [Perspectives] section of the Madrid-based *El Parlamentario* newspaper there appeared one of the most important declarations of that movement's presence in Spain, from the pen of Rafael Cansinos Assens, announcing the emergence of an independent and diverse group bringing all artistic movements under its tent.

During this period of great importance for the development of the Madrid avant-garde, when the spirit of artistic freedom and independence was more vital than ever before, December 1920 saw the inauguration of the First Autumn Salon, where the so-called "Rogues' Room" featured works by Władysław Jahl and Marjan Paszkiewicz, among others.⁵⁷ The Polish artists never wasted a single opportunity to participate in artistic events. One of the most important they took part in was held in January 1920, at the time when the first issue of the journal *Ultra* was published. It was inaugurated with an Ultraist evening held at the Salón Parisiana in Madrid, under the patronage of the poet Mauricio Bacarisse. In attendance were such poets and artists as Humberto Rivas Panedas, Gerardo Diego, César A. Comet, Rafael Lasso de la Vega, Guillermo Rello, Tomás Luque, Eugenio Montes, Guillermo de Torre and Daniel Vázquez Díaz.

Owing to the spiritual independence of the artists and their diverse paths of development, Ultraism became a movement encompassing the Planism of Celso Lagar, the Vibrationism of Rafael Barradas, Cubist simplifications of Vázquez Díaz, the Expressionism of Norah Borges, and, of course, the oeuvre of Paszkiewicz and Jahl.

Although Ultraist art was seldom shown to the public, the presence of Polish artists was always visible within it.

Alongside the Argentinian Norah Borges, Jahl became one of the more significant graphic illustrators of important Ultraist publications. As a writer he published several theoretical texts concerning avant-garde art, such as "La probidad en el arte" [Honesty in art] in which he performed a short synthesis of modern art aimed at Italian metaphysical painting, French purism, and German radicalism, which the Ultraists were familiar with, printed in *Ultra* in October 1921. In his artwork appearing in Ultraist journals, one should emphasize references to such masters as Cézanne and Matisse. Other influences visible in his oeuvre included the Vibrationism of Uruguayan Rafael Barradas, with his dynamically intersecting lines and contrasts of white with black, as well as invocations of the expressionist language of Borges. In 1922, Guillermo de Torre categorised Jahl as a representative of Simultanism and Polish Formism⁵⁸.

One of Jahl's first illustrations appeared in the inaugural edition of the journal *Ultra* in 1921, a reproduction of a print presented in the catalogue for the exhibition in the Ministry of State. His works were frequently printed in *Ultra* (**fig. 23**), and can be found in issues 10, 12, 13, 16, 18

⁵⁵ Enrabiri, op. cit.

⁵⁶ Juan Manuel Bonet, "Baedeker del ultraísmo," in *El ultraísmo y las artes plásticas* (Valencia: IVAM Centre Julio González, 1996), pp. 9–58.

⁵⁷ Antonio Ballesteros de Martos, "El primer Salón de Otoño," *Cosmópolis* (Madrid, December 1920).

⁵⁸ Guillermo de Torre, "El renacimiento xilográfico. Tres grabadores ultraístas," *Cosmópolis* (Madrid, August 1922).

and 20. His drawings were also presented in the Madrid journal *Horizonte*, where he served as the artistic director, as well as in *Índice* and *Ley* published by the poet Juan Ramón Jiménez. His distinguished book illustrations include *Poemas de Invierno* (1921) of César González Ruano, and drawings for an article by Ramón Gómez de la Serna in the daily *Nuevo Mundo* in 1928.⁵⁹

Another thing that merits a mention is a shop with “Ultraist decorative art,” which Jahl operated together with his wife Lucia Auerbach, at 86 Goya Street. It was a sort of studio, similar to the avant-garde shops with modernist items that had been opened previously by the Simultanist Sonia Delaunay in Bilbao and Madrid. What is more, Ultraist writer César González Ruano mentions this studio in his memoirs, where he writes of the Polish couple’s “Cubist lamps and chandeliers”; other interior design items could be found there, along with dresses, furniture, ceramics (**fig. 24**) and articles presenting interesting effects based on transparency and colour.

The current state of knowledge regarding Polish artists in Spain during the first decades of the 20th century and their later fates both at home and abroad results from the work of Juan Manuel Bonet, Monika Poliwka and Piotr Rypson. It is thanks to them that the present article could be supplemented with new information and works located in the aforementioned catalogue to the exhibition *The Pope of the Avant-garde. Tadeusz Peiper in Spain, Poland and Europe*.

Translated by Aleksandra Szkudłapska

⁵⁹ At the time of writing this article, the current state of research is most accurately presented in: Poliwka, “Polacy a ultraizm,” op. cit., pp. 76–109. See also the Spanish version of the catalogue – pp. 79–110.