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Artists' Colonies as a Response to the Experience of Modernity. The Case of Zakopane

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Artists' colonies were a product of artists' mass emigration from big cities to minor, often unknown rural or small-town neighbourhoods. These were artistic communities – communes whose members lived together, worked together, and devoted much of their time to creating and debating art. After taking shape in the 1830s these colonies spread throughout Europe, especially its central and northern parts, and by the turn of the century (1890–1914) they were undergoing their greatest expansion and growth. They continued to operate after World War I, responding to the challenges presented by the new political order in Europe and often embracing strong nationalistic virtues. Defining the phenomenon of artists' colonies is no easy task, as they were a complex cultural phenomenon encompassing various fields of creativity (literature, visual arts, architecture, music, dance, theatre).

The artists' colony had its genesis in the Romantic breakthrough, which propagated a new attitude towards nature. Nature was henceforth considered an autonomous entity, mysterious, spiritual and eternal. The romantic desire to reveal the essence of existence was the impetus behind many a 19th-century sightseeing trip. Romantics were also inspired by 18th-century catchwords calling for a return to nature, and by the new concept of nature education developed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, which was akin to their way of thinking. Before long, nature and especially mountains were recognized as a habitat of peace, virtue and freedom, bestowing physical and moral revival on its denizens.

The 19th-century explorers were followed by collectors – and later, ethnographers – with a vivid interest in the communities inhabiting these peripheral, poorly known regions. They discerned a primitiveness in the dwellers of these areas that seemed the perfect antidote to the negative consequences of technological civilization. The world of 'wild tribes' (including the mythical Slavs) enthralled German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder.[1] In the second half of the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche modified the myth of the noble savage, proposing a new model of man – a hero who draws his power from the laws of nature. The image of the peasant as a barbaric child of Nature was significantly influenced by the evolutionary ideas of Charles Darwin and the widespread reception of a concept elaborated by the English archaeologist, anthropologist and ethnologist Edward B. Taylor. In 1871, Taylor's work "Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom" presented his theory of *survivals*, which he understood as habits functioning in society that have roots in an older culture.[2] These archaic customs and the corresponding way of thinking were, Taylor argued, preserved and passed on by peasants, who were the carriers of knowledge about the sources and the arch-patterns of culture. Today, Taylor's theory has not only found acceptance among anthropologists but has come to dominate thinking about folk culture in modernist literature, art and critique.[3]

Zakopane is the best example of an artists' colony growing and flourishing on this ideological substrate. The first 19th-century explorers to reach this peripheral centre at the foot of the Tatra Mountains were romantically enthralled by nature and legends telling of treasures hidden inside mountains. Thereafter came medics who found the region's

[1] G. Herder, *Wybór pism* [Selection of writings], ed. by T. Namowicz, Wrocław, 1987.

[2] E. B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology; Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom,* vol. I, II, London, 1871; Polish edition: *Cywilizacja pierwotna*, Warszawa, 1896–1898.

[3] A. Jankowska-Marzec, *Między etnografią a sztuką. Mitologizacja Huculów i Huculszczyzny w kulturze polskiej XIX i XX wieku* [Between Ethnography and Art. The Mythologization of Hutsuls in Polish Culture in the XIX and XX c.], Kraków, 2013, p. 25–51.

climate suitable for treating tuberculosis. Soon, enthusiasts and experts in construction, ornamentation and artisanal handicrafts were showing up among the incoming tourists and patients. This was when the first studies of Zakopane were done (e.g. by Władysław Matlakowski) and the first ethnographic collections compiled (by Bronisław Dembowski and Zygmunt Gnatowski, among others). However, the chief contributor to the mythologization of Zakopane was the painter and art critic Stanisław Witkiewicz Senior (1851–1915), (fig. 1), who took up permanent residence there in 1890. Influenced by Taylor's above-mentioned theory of survivals, Witkiewicz discerned the intact values of ancient Polish culture in the Zakopane style, deeming the architecture and design of the local Polish highlanders to be in the Polish national style. Buildings both sacred and secular were erected according to the rules of Zakopane style established by Witkiewicz, and the same rules were followed in the design of furniture and household belongings. Clothing and jewellery were likewise stylized along these lines.[4]

In the last third of the 19th century, intellectuals arrived in Zakopane – scientists, doctors, painters, writers and the first ethnographers, who discovered a fascinating world full of beauty and exotics. They found the highlanders to be people instilled with such virtues as courage, honour, nonconformity, and above all patriotism and love of freedom. At the same time, these intellectuals tried to improve living conditions in the region by introducing the ideas of civilization and industrialization. The newcomers tried to learn, describe and protect this world. The first mountain trips there were organized by the first rector of Zakopane, the priest Józef Stolarczyk (1816–1893), who was widely recognized for his development of this alpine tourism. Stolarczyk also cared for his highland flock, tending to their morality, teaching them rules of hygiene and trying to improve education in Zakopane while also cultivating the

[4] About the Zakopane style see for example: T. Jabłońska, *Fine Arts in the Tatra Foothills*, Zakopane, 2016; T. Jabłońska, *The Zakopane Style of Stanisław Witkiewicz*, Olszanica, 2008. On the artists' colony in Zakopane see for example: K. Chrudzimska-Uhera, *Styllizacje i modernizacje. O rzeźbie i rzeźbiarzach w Zakopanem w latach 1879–1939* [Stylizations and Modernizations. Sculpture and Sculptors in Zakopane 1879–1939], Warszawa, 2013.

1. Stanisław Witkiewicz Sr and Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) in Zakopane. Ca 1910

language and traditions of the highlanders. Another storied figure in the origins of the village was Tytus Chałubiński (1820–1889), a doctor from Warsaw known as the King of Tatra. Having first arrived in Zakopane in 1873 to fight an epidemic of cholera, he then started a non-profit practice for highlanders, trying to improve their living standards. Thanks to Chałubiński's efforts, Zakopane became a health resort in 1886. Thereafter it began to thrive, becoming a well-known destination for tourists and holidaymakers.

In 1873, Chałubiński, Stolarczyk and others founded the Tatra Society to promote research on the Carpathian region, popularize tourism, protect Tatra's natural environment, and support local industry. To support the local populace, in 1876 the Tatra Society founded the School of Wood Crafts (fig. 2), where highlanders from the whole Podhale region could learn a craft (carpentry or building) that offered them opportunity for a better, wealthier life. The Tatra Museum, founded on the initiative of the Tatra Society in 1888, specialized in ethnographic and botanical exhibits.

2. The School of Wood Crafts in Zakopane. Ca 1900

By 1890 the ground was prepared for creation of an artists' colony. In 1891 Stanisław Witkiewicz remarked: 'Zakopane took on the role of the cultural capital of Poland and became a field of experiments, a field fertilized by a mass of good intentions and deeds, unlike anywhere else. Everything that emerges here arises from individual initiative and independent reasons among people of goodwill and highly social instincts who are not always conscious of the effects of their initiatives and do not look critically enough at people and their activities'.[5] However, the intellectual newcomers did not intend to make very deep changes in local life

[5] S. Witkiewicz, Styl zakopiański [The Zakopane Style], *Kurier Warszawski*, 1891, cit. after: T. Jabłońska, op. cit., p. 32.

and culture, for their romantic admiration of the highlanders' beauty and nobility caused them to see the highlanders as noble savages who should serve as role models for people from cities. In this view, the highlanders were to become a source of regeneration and invigoration that would help people to regain the values lost in modern civilization. One of these values – the love of freedom – would, it was believed, help Poland to win its independence. Furthermore, the Podhale was held to have kept ancient Slavian traditions intact in the forms of folk art and building craft. Following this idea, Stanisław Witkiewicz established his Zakopiański Style, which dominated perceptions of the Polish national style for the next few decades.

Though Witkiewicz was a painter and an art critic, he created the Zakopane style mainly in the field of architecture. The first house in the Zakopane style was the Koliba [Polish: hut] Villa built for Zygmunt Gnatowski in 1891. Witkiewicz wanted to build a modern, comfortable house modelled on the peasant's hut. In the second volume of his "Zakopane Style", he wrote: 'The idea was to use the most characteristic and advanced building elements of Highlander construction, and develop others from their raw state so as to meet the higher demands of life without destroying their essential character. The idea was also to give shape to the material in accordance with the requirements of the architecture so that the raw form of wood used by the Highlanders was then made into a form created by human thought'.[6] The Koliba Villa combined folk architecture with the contemporary requirements for comfort, functionality and beauty, but above all, it had the national character of the *koliba*—the hut. As Witkiewicz explained: 'The villa [...] would prove that one could have a beautiful house in the Zakopane Style which would be strong enough to withstand rain, strong winds and the winter cold, whilst also having all the latest facilities and comforts. At the same time it would be beautiful as any other place and, moreover, it would be distinctively Polish'.[7] While

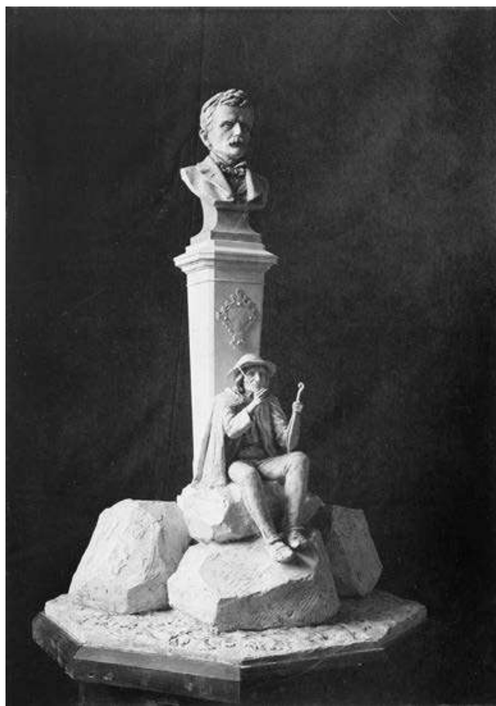
[6] S. Witkiewicz, *Styl zakopiański. Zeszyt II. Ciesielstwo* [The Zakopane Style. Vol. II, Carpentry], Lwów, 1911, cit. after: Z. Moździerz, *The Zakopane Style Trial. A guide*, Zakopane, 2014, p. 22.

[7] S. Witkiewicz, *Styl zakopiański. Zeszyt II*, cit. after: T. Jabłońska, op. cit., p. 35.

3. The Koliba Villa. Ca 1900

working on the *koliba* concept, Witkiewicz produced the idea of the villa and made general sketches. Then, because he admired the highlanders' skills, he put the realization of the building in the hands of a team of trustworthy local carpenters and woodcarvers. Witkiewicz also designed the interior fittings and decorative details in the Koliba Villa in the Zakopane style and had them made by local carpenters and woodcarvers. This model of cooperation between Witkiewicz and the highlanders was also used in subsequent architectural projects. (fig. 3)

Witkiewicz designed several houses in Zakopane: Pepita (1893), Korwinówka-Oksza (1895–96), Zofiówka (1895), and especially the "House 'Under the Firs'" (1896–97), built for Jan Gwalbert Pawlikowski



4. Jan Nalborczyk. Model of the Tytus Chałubiński Monument in Zakopane. 1900

and soon considered the pinnacle of the Zakopane Style. He also designed pieces of furniture for it (made by Kazimierz Sieczka in 1898). The furnishings were designed by Witkiewicz (the dining room), Wojciech Brzega (living room), and Józef Kaspruś Stoch and Jędrzej Krzeptowski (the bedroom and guest rooms).

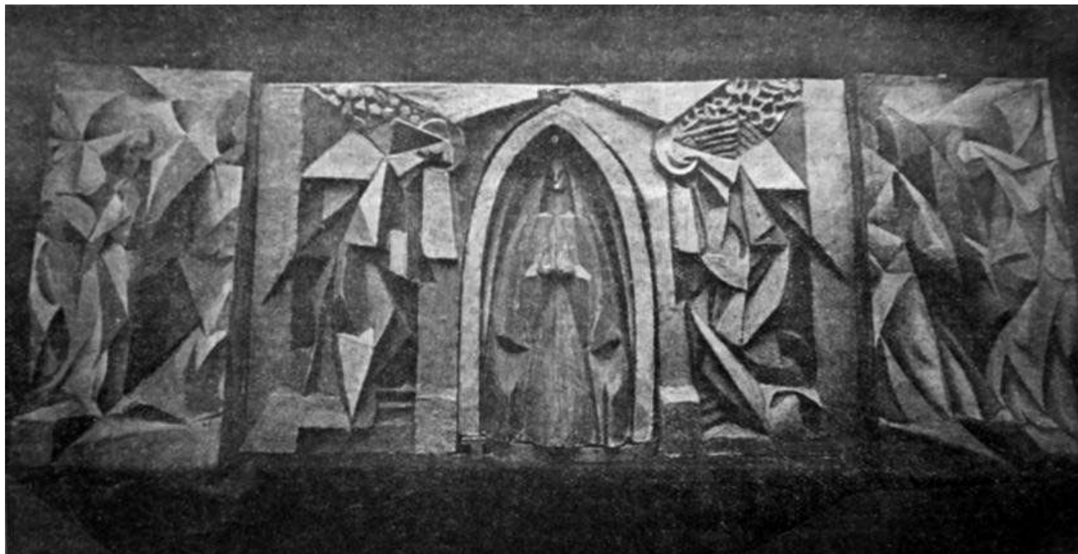
By 1900 Zakopane was playing an important role as a hub of the late 19th- and early 20th-century modernism known as the Young Poland movement. In those years the Zakopane's School of Wood Crafts became an important cultural and educational centre. Its teachers were not only craftsmen, as they had been in the past, but also artists, among them sculptors with academic backgrounds. These new instructors changed the educational objective, persuading pupils to think about sculpture in terms of artistic creation. Among the new, professional teachers were the sculptor Jan Nalborczyk (1870–1940), the first Polish member of the school staff (fig. 4); Władysław Skoczylas (1883–1934), known mainly as a talented woodcut artist; and Józef Skotnica (1876–1920), a Czech sculptor educated in Vienna and at the Paris Academy.

It was also at the turn of the century that a younger generation of artists gained recognition. On February 1, 1902, the first fine arts exhibition in Zakopane opened at the Zakopane Reading Room [Czytelnia Zakopiańska]. This was the debut of the talented sculptor Wojciech Brzega (1872–1942), a graduate of the School of Wood Crafts and close

5. Sculptor Wojciech Brzega posing in highlander costume. Ca 1900

collaborator of Stanisław Witkiewicz in his work on the Zakopane style, and the first highlander to have studied at the Academies of Fine Arts in Kraków, Munich and Paris (fig. 5). A second Tatra highlander academic sculptor, Stanisław Sobczak (1884–1942), also a graduate of the Zakopane's School of Wood Crafts, had studied at the Kraków and Paris Academies of Fine Arts. After completing their studies abroad, these two sculptors became leaders in the first highland generation of intellectuals and artists when they returned to Zakopane to engage in local social and artistic life, politics and education. After this distinctive change, the native population took on an increasingly important role in local society, and their influence became stronger. By the interwar period their position was firmly established.

On 5 September 1915, the death of Stanisław Witkiewicz in Lovrana on the Adriatic marked the end of the era of Zakopane style. Now Zakopane became a haven for refugees from different parts of country who were escaping war. Among them were the brothers Zbigniew and Andrzej Pronaszko, who had been driven from Cracow by the Austrian army. These young, modern artists introduced Zakopane to new artistic trends in painting, sculpture and theatre. On their initiative, an exhibition staged in Zakopane's Polish Bazaar opened on 3 September 1916. It featured young artists' works showing new modernist and expressionist trends. These new styles were fully manifested in the brothers' next



6. Zbigniew Pronaszko. Model of an altar. Ca 1912

exhibition. Held in Kraków in November 1917, it was titled the First Exhibition of Polish Expressionists [I Wystawa Ekspresjonistów Polskich]. Participants included the Pronaszko brothers; Zakopane artists such as Tymon Niesiołowski, Tytus Czyżewski and Władysław Skoczylas; and modern artists from Kraków. They sought a new form – a shift away from exposing the coincidence and changeability of nature (as was typical of impressionism) towards stressing what was stable, universal and spiritual. This new form, modelled on primitive art, was represented in the exhibition by a set of 28 original folk paintings on glass made by highlanders. Thus was born one of the most important trends in the Polish art of the first half of the 20th century: Formism, which originated in genuine fascination with the folk art of the Podhale region (fig. 6).

In 1918, when the end of the war was apparent, Zakopane – for the last time – acknowledged its historical and political mission by founding the Republic of Zakopane [Rzeczpospolita Zakopiańska], with the

writer Stefan Żeromski (1864–1925) as its president. For some dozen days, this was the first small piece of independent Poland. It was a special time, when artists became politicians. For a moment the utopian ideas of idealistic community were realized.

Once the war was over, Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (1885–1939) returned from Russia. He was called Witkacy to distinguish him from his well-known father – also Stanisław – who had created the Zakopane style. Witkacy joined the group of Formists and also worked on his famous Theory of Pure Form. As a writer, philosopher, modern painter and creator of the Formist Theatre [Teatr Formistyczny], Witkacy was an extremely original, renowned personality in Zakopane. Another important member of the Formist group in Zakopane was the futurist painter and philosopher Leon Chwistek (1884–1944), who elaborated the Theory of a Multiplicity of Realities in Art [*Wielość rzeczywistości w sztuce*, 1918]. In 1918 the talented sculptor August Zamoyski (1893–1970) came to Zakopane from Vienna. Zamoyski was associated with the Poznań group of expressionists known as Rebellion [Bunt] and had taken part in that group's first exhibition that April in Poznań. The exhibition provoked a scandal, mainly because of 'immoral' works by Zamoyski, and the fact that Zamoyski was a member of the Polish aristocracy only fanned the flames. His uncle Władysław Zamoyski owned land in Zakopane, which was probably what had encouraged the sculptor to settle there with his wife, the Italian dancer Rita Sacchetto. Both led vibrant artistic lives in Zakopane: August modelled sculptures in his studio; Rita danced at the Morskie Oko Theatre and opened a private school of dance. Collaborating closely with Witkacy and the Formists, they attempted to integrate art, literature, theatre and dance in one fascinating, modernistic, sensational performance. This happening, entitled the "Nite [*sic!*] of Futurists" [Wieczur Futórystów], took place in the summer of 1921 and attracted the participation of the day's most renowned avant-garde writers and poets.

A new legend of Zakopane was being created – especially by Witkacy. Just as the senior Witkiewicz had created the legend of the Tatra Mountains and Tatra highlander culture, his son, Witkacy, was now creating a new myth: 'the demonized Zakopane', whose inhabitants were

7. Zofia Stryjeńska. *The Seasons of the Year* at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts and Modern Industry in Paris. 1925

infected by 'zakopianina', a mysterious virus that was destroying the common, logical way of life by depriving people of rational thought. By creating a model of a pure nonsense world, Witkacy also invented a pure nonsense art, which allowed him to criticize the contemporary reality: society, politics and art as well.[8]

Meanwhile, there was still a pressing need to create a new Polish national style referring to the folk tradition. The International Exposition of Decorative Arts and Modern Industry in Paris in 1925 was an excellent

[8] The literature concerning Witkacy is numerous. For the compendium of knowledge about 1918–1939 period see: J. Degler, *Witkacego portret wielokrotny* [Witkacy's multiple portrait], Warszawa, 2014.

8. Jan Szczepkowski. *The Nativity Chapel* at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts and Modern Industry in Paris. 1925

venue for showcasing the Polish national identity. For Poland, which had just regained independence after 123 years of partition by foreign powers, this was an opportunity to establish itself as belonging to European culture and tradition. In Paris, outstanding 'primitive' sculptures were shown in a 'Polish Department' along the Esplanade des Invalides. Inside the Polish Pavilion were furniture, columns and the fantastic paintings "The Seasons of the Year" [Pory roku] by Zofia Stryjeńska (1891–1976), a famous, respected, popular artist sometimes called the 'Princess of Polish Painting' (fig. 7). Her spontaneous, decorative painting drew on folklore, Slavic mythology and Polish rituals and customs. The tradition of highland wood craft was also clearly visible in the Nativity Chapel [Kapliczka

9. Teachers (second row, from left: Wojciech Brzega, Karol Stryjeński, Roman Olszowski) and pupils in the workshop of the School of Wood Crafts in Zakopane. Ca 1925. In the background: typical school sculptures in Art Déco style

Bożego Narodzenia] by Jan Szczepkowski (1878–1964), a renowned sculptor and former student of Zakopane's School of Wood Crafts, who was honoured in Paris with a Grand Prix and the Order of Legion of Honour (fig. 8). The Nativity Chapel became a sign of Polish success and is synonymous with the national style of the Second Republic. Szczepkowski's work combined folk inspirations and modernist features in a geometric style associated with French Cubism and Italian Futurism. Thus he blended the Polish style with 'modernity'. In the years following the Paris Exhibition (L'Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels

modernes, 1925), this style – the Polish version of Art Déco – was also introduced in the School of Wood Crafts in Zakopane, where woodworkers under the direction of Wojciech Brzega and Roman Olszowski produced compositions of deeply cut, sharp, three-dimensional crystalline forms (fig. 9).

The Second World War definitively ended the era of the Zakopane colony. Many of Zakopane's artists emigrated and never returned to Poland. Facing Soviet invasion, Witkacy committed suicide on 17 September 1939. In November 1939 some highlanders seized on the idea of *goralenvolk*, the belief that Polish highlanders belong to the unique German race. The old world of idealistic concepts was shattered.

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The key factors illuminating the historical and intellectual context of the artists' colonies that were set up across Europe are the modernists' critical attitude towards their contemporaneous times and their attraction to the myth of regeneration, which they idealistically interpreted as a striving for spiritual, social and artistic revival. The concept of modernism has not been explicitly defined. In fact, it is difficult even to accurately determine the movement's chronological boundaries. Most commonly, the period 1885–1935 is assumed, although the beginning of modernism is sometimes placed as early as 1870, especially when Nietzsche and Rimbaud are taken into account. The end of the period is set in 1950s, which allows the inclusion of abstraction and the works of European modernists who emigrated to the United States.[9] It is no easier to identify modernism's key features or specify its issues. This period is best characterized by its various phenomena, some of which contradict each other. Mutually exclusive attitudes came to the fore: extreme individualism and commitment to the revival of society; fascination with technology and defence of traditions; decadence and reform efforts; despair and hope.

[9] R. Sheppard, Problematyka modernizmu europejskiego [Aspects of European Modernism], in *Odkrywanie modernizmu. Przekłady i komentarze* [Discovering Modernism. Translations and Commentaries], ed. by R. Nycz, Kraków, 1998, p. 72.

The literary scholar Richard Scheppard, a specialist in issues of modernism, saw the movement as representing both diagnosis of and answer to the experience of modernity. He emphasized that after the mid–19th century 'the Enlightenment myth of progress, capitalist and liberal in its substance, was superseded by a tendency to categorize the ongoing [...] changes as decadence and demise, and, consequently, to perceive them as the direct result of degeneration of modernity'.[10] Awareness increased gradually and around 1910 became certainty that all spheres of human life are subject to global process of transformation whose long-term effects are by no means positive for either the individual or the society.

Western people had realized that the Enlightenment's rational system, which was supposed to liberate mankind from the bondage of both Nature and feudalism, had instead proved to be an enslavement epitomized by the modern city. Many saw modern society, inhabitants of the urban and technological world, as having undergone transmutation into a 'Weltstadt – an insane megalopolis, associated throughout pre-war painting and Expressionists' poetry [...] with darkness, plunging into the demonic realm, immersion in the elements and the dystopian machine'.[11] Modern urban experience held nothing of the experience of impressionist *flâneur*. To German expressionists, Berlin epitomized the *Großstadt* – a great city, which they regularly depicted as hell. Artists exposed the dark side of urban life, deviance and demoralization. The city instilled loneliness and a feeling of disconnectedness from one's roots.

Sheppard put it this way: 'Paradoxically, [...] the generation that has grown up in the midst of triumphant achievements of ever more confident 19th-century science, technology and economics, has realized now that these structures started to become dysfunctional and potentially totalitarian. What's more [...] they felt that they faced the danger of transformation of these achievements into their very antithesis – entropic chaos, which the sociologist Emile Durkheim dubbed *anomie* [...]. It was this sense of absence of values – according to Durkheim caused by

[10] P. Juszkiewicz, *Cień modernizmu* [The Shadow of Modernism], Poznań, 2013, p. 65.

[11] R. Sheppard, op. cit., p. 87.

the destruction of traditional communities by modernity – that triggered the 'panic and dismay' [...] permeating so many modernist works'.[12] The Enlightenment project was in crisis. Later it became clear that the sense of chaos, disintegration of structures, deconstruction of hierarchy and traditional values, and lack of certainty about the future were the price paid for the triumph of rationalism. In this historical context, theorists of modernism like Sheppard or Griffin, define modernism as the reaction – multiple in nature and genesis – to the anomic aspects of modernity.[13]

Many prominent modernist artists and intellectuals claimed modern European culture was experiencing upheaval in the sphere of fundamental principles and the conceptual models upon which the era of liberal humanism had been founded. Sheppard identifies three main areas affected by the global revaluation: understanding what constitutes reality, understanding what constitutes human nature, and perception of the relationship between man and reality.[14]

First, in the period under review, the binding model of reality, couched in Newtonian categories and principles of Euclidean geometry, was essentially challenged. The discovery of the electric field (by Maxwell in 1861) and findings in subatomic physics and astrophysics (Einstein, Brogli, Schrödinger, Dirac) revealed that seemingly stable reality is not material and organized, but energetic, volatile and chaotic. Suddenly, the real world in which people felt at ease turned out to be at the mercy of forces that permeated it, over which humans had no control.[15] Modernist artists did not remain unmoved. Painters reacted to the new scientific ideas by distancing themselves from the accepted, fixed point of view and the traditional perspective. This resulted in disruption of linear order, both causal and temporal (cycles by Monet), and the *dinamismo universale* praised in the manifests of Italian Futurism.

[12] Ibid., p. 84. Durkheim used the term *anomie* in *Le Suicide* (1897) and *De la Division du travail social* (1902).
[13] R. Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of the Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler*, Basingstoke-New York, 2001, following: P. Juszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 64.
[14] R. Sheppard, op. cit., p. 91–92.
[15] Ibid., p. 91–97.

At the same time, the contemporary understanding of human nature was revised. 19th-century liberal humanists were convinced that people, being endowed with the power of reason that allows them to understand nature and exercise control over themselves, are inherently moral. Friedrich Nietzsche's critique of this approach was complemented by the work of Sigmund Freud, Carl Gustav Jung and Alfred Adler, according to whom human behaviour is controlled by irrational, amoral forces of unconsciousness that are only partially under reason's control.[16]

The changes described here transformed the modernist understanding of the relationship between man and reality into something fundamentally different from the one nurtured by 19th-century intellectuals. The modernists felt dissonance between the structures of the material world, the human logos and the realm of the metaphysical. Their sense of dispossession, exile and utmost alienation, as Richard Sheppard pointed out, provoked the four key questions the modernists sought to answer, about the state of mind, the status of the language, the nature of history and the standing of Western culture.[17] The power of reason fell into question, and the irrational driving forces of human nature – Dionysian vitality (Nietzsche), energy (futurism), ecstasy (expressionism), spontaneity and intuition (Dada), unconsciousness (surrealism) – came to the fore. According to modernists, language, as system of variable signs, had turned out to be subjective and limited in scope, imprecise and unreliable. To help it out, they introduced innovations like abstract poetry, non-verbal elements and sounds into literature. Another fundamental change involved concepts of history and time: a modernist sense of constant change and expectation of apocalypse had revised the binding linear model, replacing it with a structure that was fluid and devoid of centre.

These reassessments raised the fourth modernist question, which appears crucial in the context of this discussion: the status of Western culture, a topic accompanied by profound doubts about the uncritically assumed supremacy of Western civilization. Sheppard refers here to the

[16] Ibid., p. 101–102.
[17] Ibid., p. 113–123.

10. A trip in the Tatra Mountains. 1919–1939

idea of the German aesthetician Wilhelm Worringer, who in his work "Abstraktion und Einfűhlung" [Abstraction and Empathy] (1907)[18] distinguished between the *empathetic* art created in cultures marked by a sense of settledness in the world (corresponding to the representational art of the West), and the *abstract* art produced in cultures affected by the feeling that the man is at the mercy of hostile elements or mythological powers (corresponding to non-representational art of extra-European cultures). Worringer's thesis expressed his belief that apparently 'primitive' cultures that are less civilizationally advanced than the modern West may nonetheless be better equipped to describe and understand the non-anthropocentric universe that evoked such a deep sense of angst (existential anxiety) in modernists.[19] Primitive cultures seemed to modernists to be ideal, utopian models able to restore harmony to modern societies. This relationship was also noticed by another contemporary scholar of modernism, Roger Griffin, who saw modernist anomie as the reason modernity featured such a characteristic multitude of utopian regeneration projects, revitalization movements and ideological communities: they were set up by modern 'castaways in time' who were driven by a need to regenerate society and renew history.[20]

This awareness permeated all modernist works. It was manifested in Gauguin's travel to Tahiti, Delacroix's fascination with the Orient, expressionists' affinity for extra-European art (e.g. as expressed in "Der Blaue Reiter Almanac", 1912), the works of the members of the Brücke group and the neo-primitivism of Vorticists. It was believed that 'pre-modern and non-Western cultures did not separate *logos* from the rest of the personality and rather coexisted with external Nature than strove to dominate it. So, [...] [they are] granted freedom and balance which the West, undergoing the modernization process, has already lost or is just losing'.[21] This was one of the main reasons to organize pseudo-primitive communes modelled on tribal communities – in other words, artists'

[18] W. Worringer, *Abstraktion und Einfűhlung*, München, 1907.

[19] R. Sheppard, op. cit., p. 120.

[20] P. Juszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 64–65.

[21] R. Sheppard, op. cit., p. 121.

colonies like the one in Worpswede in Bremen, in Pont-Aven, in Bavarian Murnau, in Schreiberhau (Szklarska Poręba) in the Sudetes, in Nagybánya (mountains of Transylvania, now in Romania), and in Zakopane and Kazimierz nad Wisłą, both on Polish soil.

To reiterate: the cult of 'primitivism', manifested in an artists' fascination with the late 19th- and early 20th-century creations of primitive, non-European cultures, far transcended the treatment of artefacts as mere sources of formal and aesthetic inspiration. At the core of 'modernist primitivism' (the term used by Robert Goldwater in the 1930s)[22] was the belief that non-European or pre-modern cultures should be treated as models to follow – alternatives to the modern society enslaved by industrial civilization. This was why references to local traditions and vernacular, pre-modern art were so prevalent in the artists' colonies.

In the context of Zakopane region, the Zakopane style, created on the basis of local and traditional motifs, merits mention here. Around 1915 the modernist creators of the younger generation became keenly interested in the local art of painting on glass. In Zakopane it gave a primitivistic impetus to the works of young, modern painters and sculptors.

Before the First World War, the modernists – being more or less clearly aware that that Western humanistic culture was in a state of crisis – offered diverse responses. Sheppard identifies several distinct types of reaction.[23] All were within the sphere of culture, and each contributed meaningfully to creating a favourable climate for fledgling artists' colonies. The most pessimistic type of reaction to the crisis, according to Sheppard, was distinguished by *nihilism*. Many artists and modernist intellectuals afflicted by Durkheim's anomie succumbed to the premonition that apocalyptic annihilation was imminent. The consequences of such an attitude included descent into insanity, suicide, or total breakdown. Another response, typical of expressionists, consisted in seeking an exit from the crisis via *ecstatic liberation* (aided by stimulants or harrowing experience), or in other words, getting to the truth by relaxing the

[22] R. Goldwater, *Primitivism in Modern Painting*, New York, 1938.

[23] Ibid., p. 124–137.

senses. The third route was defined by a turn towards *mysticism*, perceived as a process of finding a solid spiritual base beyond (or inside) the apparent chaos – hence the modernists' great interest in Platonism, esotericism and Eastern mysticism. The fourth response, closely related to mysticism, was *aestheticism*, marked by a passionate urge to reveal the sacred character of art. This stance stemmed from the belief that art is a conduit to timeless, transcendent meanings. The yearning was particularly ardent among the artists associated in colonies, who were a prolific source of artistic visions of saving the world through creativity, a force deemed capable of advancing society's physical, social and moral revival.

This attitude is akin to the fifth category of modernist response to modernity, which proposed turning away from civilization and seeking *refuge* 'out of time' through emigration to a 'fixed point' geographically distant from the confusion of modernity. Having rejected the values of Western civilization, modernists strived to locate the foundations of a new, reborn society, seeing both the perfect, hieratic past and equally fascinating models of total societies of the future in the right- and left-wing utopias of totalitarian systems.

In sum, the artists' colonies embodied the endeavour to generate a rebirth of humanity and build a perfect society. They were considered a refuge from big-city civilization and the backlash of the experience of modernity. Urban civilization was perceived to threaten humanistic values and national interests. From a sociological perspective, the mechanisms that standardized social attitudes and transformed society into in a nameless mass were the cause for concern. From an aesthetic standpoint, it was the decline in the authority of the artist-genius and elite artistry that was troubling. Artists' colonies sprang from idealistic origins and often were linked with pseudo-religious movements (e.g. occultism, theosophy, spiritualism). The shared elements in this regard were a strong connection to nature, considered the source of spiritual and moral rebirth; and confidence in the salutary, regenerative potential of artistic creation.

Another crucial theme, the idea of freedom, was understood primarily as humans' liberation from the supremacy of the mechanisms of industrial civilization, but also as a modernist freedom to create. It was

complemented by the modernists' utopian belief that it is possible to construct a new, better world. This transition, it was assumed, would require an anthropological revolution to blaze the trail to the creation of a new society. On this idealistic ground, the idea of artistic freedom merged with national, political, homeland-oriented ideas. Especially in artists' colonies in German lands, nature soon became closely associated with the fatherland and the Nietzschean idea of forming a new, perfect man. The idea of *Heimatkunst* – homeland art – swept the whole of Germany and had an impact in neighbouring countries too. Homeland-oriented and liberation ideas were especially important in European nations that sought to recover state sovereignty or feared for it (e.g. Poland, Czechoslovakia, Finland).

In the first three decades of the 20th century, more temples of art were erected in Germany at the initiative of the painter Hermann Hendrich.[24] As Agata Roma explained, Hendrich evoked ancient legends in an effort 'to bring to the German people their own tradition and culture defined in the supernatural deeds of the Germanic heroes [...] and in their genuine [...] symbiosis with nature'.[25] His ambition 'was to create [...] a neo-pagan temple that, through the use of [...] art, was to endow the original Germanic gods with a new meaning and a new expressiveness'.[26] Reaching back to pre-Christian notions was supposed to facilitate refutation of the Western dualistic model of the world, which was held to be rooted in Christianity. Hendrik was attempting to give Christian symbols and rituals new meanings in the spirit of folk myths and primeval tribal conceptions, and then to unify these symbols within a national myth.

Similar projects born in Zakopane were founded on a fascination with pagan Slavs. Tadeusz Miciński, a writer and member of the Warsaw

[24] Walpurgishalle (1901), Sagenhalle (1903, enlarged by the Parsifal Temple in 1926), Nibelungenhalle (1913) and Die Halle Deutscher Sagenring (1929).

[25] A. Rome-Dzida, *Niemieccy artyści w Karkonoszach w latach 1880–1945. Przyczynek do badań nad Heimatkunst* [German Artists in the Giant Mountains 1880–1945: A Contribution to Research on *Heimatkunst*], Jelenia Góra, 2013, p. 72.

[26] Ibid., p. 90.

Theosophical Society, conceived the never implemented idea to build a 'Temple for the Liberation of Humanity' in Zakopane. And in 1902, the notion of a 'temple of art' surfaced in Zakopane when Adolf Nowaczyński and William Feldman suggested erecting a giant 'national theatre' in Zakopane style on the slope of Gubałówka. This idea was revisited several times in the 1920s; for example, when Karol Stryjeński sought support for his *Świątnica* project – a wooden structure enshrouding a statue of the Slavic god Światowid.[27]

Modernists' utopian belief in the possibility of building a better world and creating a new human being was merged with an equally idealistic faith in the salvific role of art and its historically causative power. This regenerative potential of modernist art is a key category for understanding the specificity of the era's artistic phenomena (including the artists' colonies). Likewise important are the social utopias underlying modernist projects and their involvement in complex historical and political affairs. It was a common belief that only prodding would make the old world withdraw so that a new system of values, and with it a 'new man', could emerge. It was the destruction of the old that would lead to the creation of the new. In the years preceding the First World War, intellectuals were convinced an apocalypse was impending and would ultimately spawn a new culture. When war broke out, they enthusiastically enlisted in the army and set off for the front.[28] Taking this perspective, the above-quoted Griffin places such sociopolitical events as the Bolshevik revolution, the Fascist coup and the seizure of power by the Nazis – the great collective attempts to implement regenerative ideals – among the modernist revitalization projects.[29] On the other hand, the professor of art history Piotr Juszkiewicz, while exploring Polish modernism after 1945,

[27] Letter from Karol Stryjeński to Władysław Orkan, Zakopane 8 XI 1922, in *Korespondencja Władysława Orkana z lat 1891–1930* [Correspondence of Władysław Orkan, 1891–1930], v. 27, Biblioteka Jagiellońska, sign. 8630 III, c. 51–52. For another idea for a temple of art (that of Karol Kłosowski) see *Epoka,* 1927, nr. 211, p. 6; nr. 215, p. 10; nr. 217, p. 4; nr. 241, p. 6; nr. 249, p. 8.

[28] R. Wohl, *The Generation of 1914*, Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1979.

[29] P. Juszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 67.

discerned and disclosed the junction between the modernist categories of 'space' or 'new form' and communist projects aimed at rebuilding the world and remodelling the human.[30]

Ultimately, belief in the regenerative and causative power of art turned out to be a utopia, and the modernists' entanglements in the world of power and politics occasioned painful disappointment and devaluation of ideals. Their poignant consciousness of defeat has been expunged from the heroic version of modernism and moved to its 'shadow', which Piotr Juszkiewicz – citing Jung – describes as the 'dark storeroom, where everything unpleasant, uncomfortable and negative is systematically stowed'.[31] We must be aware of this shadow's existence as we seek to come closer to understanding the complicated phenomenon of modernity, which is still shaping our lives.

Transl. Jerzy P. Szyfter
and Katarzyna Chrudzimska-Uhera

[30] P. Juszkiewicz, op. cit., passim.

[31] Z.W. Dudek, *Psychologia integralna Junga* [The integral psychology of Jung], Warszawa, 2006, following: P. Juszkiewicz, op. cit., p. 13.

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Dailininkų kolonijos kaip atsakas į modernybės patirtį: Zakopanės atvejis

Santrauka

Dailininkų kolonijos, kurios tarp dviejų pasaulinių karų kūrėsi ir plito visoje Europoje, savo ankstyvojo pakilimo laikus išgyveno amžių sandūroje tarp 1890 ir 1914 metų. Dailininkų kolonijų fenomeną nėra paprasta apibūdinti, nes tai buvo kompleksiškas kultūrinis reiškinys, aprėpęs įvairius meninės veiklos laukus. Jų genezę paveikė romantikų dėmesys gamtai ir įkvėpė 18 a. kvietimai grįžti į gamtos prieglobstį bei Jeano-Jacques'o Rousseau suformuluota nauja natūralaus ugdymo koncepcija. Ilgainiui gamta, o ypač kalnai, buvo pripažinti palankiausia aplinka ieškantiems ramybės, taikos ir laisvės, atgaivinančia fiziškai ir moraliai. 19-asis amžius „primityvumą" pripažino geriausiu priešnuodžiu prieš techninės civilizacijos negatyvias pasekmes. „Laukinių genčių" pasaulis sužavėjo vokiečių filosofą Johanną Gottfriedą Herderį. 19 a. antroje pusėje Friedrichas Nietzsche perkūrė „tauraus laukinio" mitą ir pasiūlė naują žmogaus modelį – gamtos galių iškeltą herojų. Valstiečio kaip barbariško Gamtos kūdikio vaizdinį stipriai paveikė Charleso Darwino evoliucijos teorija ir anglų archeologo, antropologo bei etnologo Edwardo B. Tayloro išgyvenimo idėjos.

Pagrindiniai veiksniai, nušviečiantys Europos menininkų kolonijų istorinį ir intelektinį kontekstą – kritiškas modernistinis požiūris į savo laiko tikrovę ir atgimimo mitas, kuris buvo idealistiškai interpretuojamas kaip ėjimas link dvasinio, socialinio ir meninio atsinaujinimo. Pasak literatūros mokslininko ir Europos modernizmo specialisto Richardo Sheppardo, menininkų kolonijos buvo atsakas į entropinio chaoso patirtį, anomijas. Sociologo Émile'io Durkheimo nuomone, vertybių išnykimo įspūdis, atsiradęs modernybei suardžius tradicines bendruomenes, sukėlė „paniką ir nerimą", paženklinusius daugybę modernistinių kūrinių. Apšvietos projektas išgyveno krizę. Kaip vėliau paaiškėjo, chaoso pojūtis, struktūrinė dezintegracija, hierarchijos ir tradicinių vertybių dekonstrukcija, kartu su nepasitikėjimu ateitimi, buvo kaina, kurios pareikalavo racionalizmo triumfas. Šiame istoriniame kontekste tokie modernybės teoretikai kaip R. Sheppardas ir Rogeris Griffinas apibrėžė modernizmą kaip reakciją – daugialypę savo prigimtimi ir raida – į modernybės anomijas.

Vienas tokių pavyzdžių – Zakopanės dailininkų kolonijos, išaugusios tokiame idėjiniame substrate. Pirmieji 19 a. keliautojai, pasiekę šią nuošalią gyvenvietę Tatrų papėdėje, romantiškai susižavėjo vietine gamta. Įkandin jų atvykę medikai nutarė, jog vietinis klimatas tinka sergantiems tuberkulioze. Prie augančio atostogautojų ir ligonių srauto greitai prisijungė statybų, ornamentikos ir dailiųjų amatų entuziastai bei ekspertai. Tapytojo ir meno kritiko Stanisławo Witkiewicziaus vyresniojo nustatytos Zakopanės stiliaus taisyklės prisidėjo prie Zakopanės mitologizavimo.