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## **POLISH ART IN PORTUGAL: TO THE QUESTION OF CONTEMPORARY POLISH-PORTUGUESE ARTISTIC RELATIONS**

*The article is devoted to the theme of contemporary Polish-Portuguese artistic relations through the prism of the presence of Polish artists' works in Portugal's museums, galleries, private collections, and exhibition activities. An attempt to summarize and systematize all the existing information on this issue is made for the first time.*

*The authors describe the tangible expansion and deepening of Polish-Portuguese artistic relations. Thanks to the significant activation of a wide range of cultural activities carried out by the Embassy of Poland, Polish artists managed to transfer the artistic achievements of Poland to the Portuguese more fully and comprehensively and gain undoubted recognition of Polish art in Portugal.*

*The article analyzes the Polish art presence in the collections of the Gulbenkian Museum, Serralves Foundation, Berardo, Foco Galleries, SNAP, and private collections. The works of such Polish artists as Myroslaw Balka, Wilhelm Sasnal, Janusz Prybylski, Fayga Ostrower, Tadeusz Myslowski, Jerzy Thuzewski, Paulina Olowksf, Malgorzata Markiewicz, Henryk Stazewski, Mariola Landowska, young Polish artists Joanna Latka, Anna Stankiewicz and others are analyzed. The authors also highlight the participation of contemporary Polish artists in various artistic events in Portugal.*

*The article emphasizes that Portugal is also one of the world centers of murals, which is why it attracts many street artists, including Polish ones: MOTS, NeSpoon, BEZT, Sainer, Sepe, and others. Also among the recent events, one of the most important milestones of Polish-Portuguese artistic relations achieved was the 5th Biennale of graphic art "Global Print" in 2022, in which 19 Polish artists took part.*

*Summing up, the authors come to the conclusion that Polish art in Portugal has already established itself as high-quality and multi-genre, and over time its presence and recognition will only grow. The study of Polish art in Portugal in the context of the development of contemporary Polish-Portuguese relations clearly has deep prospects for further research, especially considering the active artistic cooperation between the two countries during the last decades.*

**Key words:** Portugal, contemporary art, Polish art, Polish-Portuguese artistic relations, private collections.

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## **ПОЛЬСЬКЕ МИСТЕЦТВО У ПОРТУГАЛІЇ: ДО ПИТАННЯ СУЧАСНИХ ПОЛЬСЬКО-ПОРТУГАЛЬСЬКИХ МИСТЕЦЬКИХ ВЗАЄМИН**

*Статтю присвячено сучасним польсько-португальським мистецьким взаєминам через призму присутності творів польських митців у музеях, галереях та приватних колекціях Португалії, а також їх участі у виставковій діяльності в цій країні. Вперше здійснено спробу узагальнити та систематизувати наявну джерельну базу з цього питання.*

*Авторами підмічено та переконливо показано відчутне розширення та поглиблення польсько-португальських мистецьких взаємин. Польським митцям, завдяки значній активізації широкого спектру культурних заходів, здійснених посольством Польщі, вдалося більш повно та всебічно доносити для португальців мистецькі здобутки Польщі та отримати безсумнівне визнання польського мистецтва у Португалії.*

*У статті аналізується польська присутність у колекціях музеїв Гулбенкяна, фундації Серралвейш, Берарда, галерей Фоко, SNAP, приватних колекцій. Аналізуються твори таких польських митців як Мирослава Балки, Вільгельма Сасналя, Януша Прибильського, Файги Островер, Тадеуша Мисловського, Єжи Тхужевського, Пауліни Ордовської, Мальгожати Маркевич, Генрика Стажевського, Маріоли Ландовської, молодих польських мисткинь Йоанни Латки та Анни Станкевич та інших. Авторами висвітлено також участь сучасних польських митців у різноманітних мистецьких подіях Португалії.*

*У статті підкреслюється, що Португалія також є однією зі світових столиць муралів, тому приваблює багатьох вуличних художників, зокрема і польських: MOTS, NeSpoon, BEZT, Sainer, Sere та інші. Також серед останніх подій, важливих віх польсько-португальських мистецьких взаємин, розглядається 5-те Бієнале графічного мистецтва "Global Print" у 2022 році, в якому взяли участь 19 польських митців.*

*Підсумовуючи, автори приходять до висновку, що польське мистецтво у Португалії вже утвердилося як якісне та різножанрове, а з часом його присутність і визнання буде тільки зростати. Дослідження польського мистецтва у Португалії у контексті розвитку сучасних польсько-португальських взаємин однозначно має глибокі перспективи подальших досліджень, особливо враховуючи активну мистецьку співпрацю між двома країнами протягом останніх десятиліть.*

**Ключові слова:** Португалія, сучасне мистецтво, польське мистецтво, польсько-португальські мистецькі взаємини, приватні колекції.

**Formulation of the problem.** Portugal and Poland: these distant countries do not have a common history, borders, traditions, as well as strong political, economical, or cultural relations. Being at different poles of Europe, Poland and Portugal nurtured their own authentic, unique culture, language and art.

However, contemporary Polish art did become popular and recognizable in Portugal. It is present in museums, well-represented at various exhibitions, and can be seen on murals all around Portugal. The works of Polish artists are successfully sold at auctions and added to the private collections of Portuguese art lovers.

The relevance of the study is determined by the understudied state of Polish-Portuguese artistic relations, the development of European integration processes in general, and the lack of special scientific explorations or studies on contemporary Polish art in Portugal. Even the first look at the current state of Polish art in Portugal demonstrates the existing artistic relations between both nations and the trends in their development, which certainly require a much deeper study and generalization.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** There are no thorough, thematic scientific investigations or studies on the works of contemporary Polish artists in Portugal. The research problem is currently represented by secondary and superficial information about contemporary Polish art in Portugal. These are, first of all, several publications containing some information about certain works of Polish artists in Portugal. As well as information from the websites of museums and galleries in Portugal, their publications, and exhibition materials are presented.

The aim of the article is to make an attempt of generalization and certain systematization of Polish contemporary art on the territory of Portugal in the context of Polish-Portuguese artistic relations.

**Main material.** The Embassy of Poland in Lisbon plays one of the most important roles in the presentation of Polish culture and art to the Portuguese. During recent decades it organized numerous events and festivals, which enabled the popularization and recognition of Polish art in Portugal and allowed to build wider Polish-Portuguese artistic connections.

The biggest public representation of Polish artists in Portugal is currently located in the prestigious "The Centro de Arte Moderna José de Azeredo Perdigão" (hereinafter – CAM), which is part of the Gulbenkian Museum. Its founder – Armenian oil tycoon Calouste Sarkis Gulbenkian has bequeathed his entire art collection initiating the foundation under his name. The modern part of this collection now consists of about 12,000 artworks, mostly by Portuguese artists, and world-renowned artists such as Sonia Delaunay, Christo, Oscar Kokoschka, Toyen, David Hockney, and others (Calouste Gulbenkian).

Nevertheless, 20 works by Polish artists also can be found in the collection. Among them are seven artworks by the Polish-Brazilian engraver Fayga Ostrower (1920–2001). The future artist was born in Poland, studied in Germany, then fled as a Jew to Belgium, before finally finding her place in Brazil. Fayga created works in the style of German expressionism, in a manner close to the works of K. Kōlwitz. Her works usually depict social themes such as the fate of women and children in her gravures "Maternidade" (1950), "Two Women and a Child" (1950), and other

works that can be found in the collection. In 1958, F. Ostrower became a prize-winner of the 29th Venice Biennale (Geiger, 2005). In 2002, after the death of the artist, the Fayga Ostrower Institute was founded, where the artist's works and documents are currently stored. The works presented in the above-mentioned Portuguese museum are black-and-white and color woodcuts from the 1950s and 1960s. Two of them were acquired by the museum after the retrospective exhibition of the artist's works in 1977, and the other five were gifted by F. Ostrower's Institute in 2020 (Almeida, 2006).

The museum's collection also includes three works by the Polish graphic artist Janusz Przybylski (1937–1998), a representative of the Polish post-war movement "Nowa figuracja" and a gold medalist at the Biennale in Brazil and Krakow. T" and "Erotyk 2". All these gravures showcase the main theme of Przybylski's work which was the image of the human body (Michalik, 2014).

The avant-garde work "Noc Odchodzi" (1974) in the museum is a painting by Jerzy Tchorzewski (1828–1999). Before the famous "National Exhibition of Young Artists" in Arsenal (1955), the Polish artist painted exclusively figuratively under the influence of surrealism, but later, he gave preference to expressive abstract painting. In these years, J. Tchorzewski complicated the texture of the paintings, using, in particular, the drying properties of a thick layer of paint and the effect of crumpled paper (Stanislawski). The painting "Noc Odchodzi" represents this second period of the artist's work (Sitkowska, 2007).

Another work in the collection is the painting of Tadeusz Myslowski "New York Composite" (1987). Myslowski is one of the few living American artists of Polish origin whose works are represented in the museum's collection. Fascinated by the canvases of K. Malevich and K. Kopro, the artist works in the style of constructivism and geometric abstraction. It is worth noting that the work of T. Myslowski, as well as the work of the surrealist J. Tchorzewski, is better known abroad than in Poland itself (Myslowski, 2011).

Also, the collection of the CAM Museum presents the works of such Polish artists as the post-war abstract artist Roman Artymowski ("Ways" (1965); the Polish-British artist Henryk Gotlib ("Landscape with a Figure", 1961); the little-known engraver Maria Jas ("Untitled", 1977); representative of the Polish Textile School, Jolanta Owidzka ("Modlitenik", 1978) (Huml, 1989); graphics by Ryszard Otreba ("Greetings V", 1967 and "Silence", 1977).

The Gulbenkian Foundation cooperates actively with various Polish museums as well as the Polish Embassy in Portugal. In the cooperation, they organ-

ized numerous exhibitions dedicated to Polish art and culture, such as expositions on Polish ethnography (1977), modern art (1976), sculpture (1977), engravings (1981, 1988), weavings (1984), posters (1978, 1988), and others. Some Polish artists had their personal exhibitions in Portugal, such as K. Pruszkowski's "Fotosynteza" (1990) and others.

As the part of the intercultural exchange, the Gulbenkian Museum also presented its expositions in the museums of Poland. These are, in particular, exhibitions of Portuguese modern prints (1975) and traditional hand painted tiles (azulejos) (1980).

Currently, the museum prefers thematic exhibitions, when paintings by artists from different countries are selected to present one specific theme. Polish artists are also invited, in particular to such exhibitions as "European Photo Exhibition Award 02" (2014, J. Brykchinsky), "World Press Cartoon" (2008, P.Kuchynskyi), and others.

A small collection of works by Polish artists is also owned by the Serralves Foundation. Although only 9 of 4,300 works of art presented here are made by Poles, all of them have quite notable authorship. These are paintings and installations by Miroslav Balka, Wilhelm Sasnal, Paulina Ołowska, and Monika Sosnowska – participants and prize-winners of many international exhibitions and biennials.

In particular, two works of one of the most famous artists of modern Poland – Miroslav Balka – are presented in the Serralves collection – "Untitled" (1994) and "The Fence" (1998, co-authored with Luke Tuymans). Miroslav Balka is a contemporary sculptor and video artist, who in his minimalistic and symbolic works reveals the themes of memory, corporeality, and war. This applies to his installation "The Fence" as well. The fence depicted in this work has always been a symbol of a happy childhood in the artist's memories. Although M. Balka knew about the Holocaust and Auschwitz, but for him, as for most Poles, ghettos and places of torture of Jews existed somewhere far away. The artist admitted that only at the age of thirty he discovered that he had lived practically across the street from the ghetto quarter during his entire childhood. That only this fenced cage separated the Jewish quarter, where M. Balka lived, from the rest of the town of Otvotsk. The artist finally learned why the town seemed so empty during his childhood games. After all, more than 75 percent of the population of the city that was more than eight thousand people, were Jews. Half of these people then simply disappeared. Realizing these events, the artist decided to make it his responsibility to fill the gaps in public memory with his works.

M. Balka's "The Fence" showcases how the artist combines persona memories and experiences with the collective cultural memory in his works. As the artist himself comments: "The most important thing in my artistic practice is to listen". The artist's installations always assume the presence of a person in his physical absence. After all, it is a human intervention that creates this experience and transforms the world (Morzuch).

The works of today's most expensive contemporary Polish artist Wilhelm Sasnal (born in 1972) are represented in the Serralves collection with four paintings: "Director", "Moszkice 1", "Moszkice 2", "Moszkice 3" (2005).

As for the majority of Polish artists, the themes of the Second World War, the Holocaust, and the feeling of constant fear became leading ones for this artist as well (Nowoczesna Sztuka Polska, 1981). In three works from the foundation's collection, W. Sasnal depicted the city of his childhood – Moshkice. The artist discovered the value of this place already at a mature age, just like M. Balka. The city was known, in particular, for the factory of nitrogen compounds. During Wilhelm's childhood, rumors were constantly spreading among the residents that if the enemies were to attack Poland, one of the first blows would be directed at the nitrogen factory. Sasnal recalled: "For many years, Moskice lived in fear of a catastrophe. They say that one of the American missiles was aimed at our town" (Marsymczak, 2021). Most of Sasnal's works dedicated to his native city are imbued with strong feelings of fear and hopelessness. The full-length film "The Fall", which Sasnal created with his wife, also shows a similar worldview. The theme of this film is the world after nuclear annihilation.

Two works in the Serralves collection ("Fryzjer" and "Niebieski ptak" (2013)) were created by the Polish artist Paulina Olowska, who even studied for some time in Portugal. In her works, P. Olowska uses a wide variety of media – painting, photography, textiles, performance, music, neon lights, and others (Zielinska, 2018).

The leading themes for this Polish artist are theater, women's destinies, and the search and analysis of utopia. The image of theater and utopia is also conveyed in her gouache work "Niebieski ptak". The canvas depicts two leaning figures on a theater stage. We can assume that these are the main characters of Maeterlinck's play ("Niebieski ptak" – "The Blue Bird" – the fairy-tale drama of the famous Belgian writer Maurice Maeterlinck) – children who find happiness not in the material, but in the spiritual. The composition and its elements are theatrical and artificial. It feels like the depicted figures are being controlled by invisible hands, like theatrical puppets. The artist consi-

ders Maeterlinck's work as a kind of utopian model of the last century, which she disassembles and analyzes on her canvas.

Her other work, "Fryzjer", is a small ceramic house cast in fluorescent yellow glaze. This piece depicts a house similar to the ones near Olowska's actual home in the town of Rabka-Zdroj, where the architecture combines both post-war and provincial features.

The foundation also owns an installation by Monika Sosnowska (b. 1972) called "Gate 1" (2014). This work, which is only the first part of an artistic quartet is made in the form of a deformed metal structure, in which the viewer can distinguish the outlines of a gate and a fence. In most of her visual works, the artist is inspired by post-war modernism in architecture. By changing the physical form of seemingly inflexible objects, M. Sosnowska works with the audience mentally, making them to perceive these heavy forged gates as something weightless and floating, turning a purely practical object into a work of art. In her interpretation, these strong, immovable structures seem to hang in space without any support and are thus deprived of their primary purpose. And then nothing prevents us from perceiving them as something complete and real (Szczerski, 2008).

The works of Polish artists can also be found in the museum "Coleção Berardo", which specializes exclusively in modern art. Almost all the works presented in the museum are part of the nationalized collection of José Berardo. At one time, Berardo was one of the richest businessmen in Portugal who took pleasure in collecting artworks. His collection consisted of about forty thousand works, including Chinese porcelain, modern art, and Buddhist statues from Afghanistan, which were later used to create the "Buddha Eden Garden" near Lisbon. But because of the multiple law problems, a significant part of his collection (1,800 works) was nationalized and turned into the "Coleção Berardo" museum (opened in 2006). The museum's collection includes works by such worldwide known artists as Kazimir Malevich, Lee Krasner, Jackson Pollock, Piet Mondrian, David Hockney, Andy Warhol, and others. Among all these famous art stars, there are also several works by Polish artists, such as Malgorzata Markiewicz, Henryk Staszewski, and Balthus.

The creativity of the Polish artist Malgorzata Markiewicz is represented by her photograph collage "Smuggled Whisper" (2007). 3 photos are presenting the artist herself in clothes with secretly sewn messages. With this work, Markiewicz wanted to reveal the bitter experience of humiliation and exploitation faced by women and children from poor countries. These people, working on clothes factories, some-

times sew their sufferings and hopes into a jacket or pants and blindly send them out into the world like a message in a bottle, not knowing who will read it and where. M. Markiewicz perceives clothes and fabric as a kind of medium, a tool through which one can convey feelings and emotions, or hide them under the mask. While mechanisms of globalization downplay and whitewash the problem of modern slavery, desperate slaves sometimes inform the world about their suffering in the form of messages sewn into their clothes (Sienkiewicz, 2915).

Another work in the Berardo Collection is "Untitled" by Henryk Stazewski (1920). This Polish artist was one of the founders of many important art associations in the interwar Poland – Grupa Kubistów, Konstruktywistów, and Suprematystów Blok (1924–1926), Praesens (1926-29) and A.R. groups (1929–1936). During the German occupation, almost all of his works were destroyed, so the canvas kept in Berardo's collection is a real catch.

The third canvas in the collection of this museum, "Portrait de Femme en Robe Bleue" (1935), belongs to the brush of the Polish-French artist Balthazar Klossowski de Rolle. Better known by his childhood nickname "Balthus", the self-taught artist never followed fashion trends in art. While other artists mastered the avant-garde, he created canvases in the style of classical European art: portraits, landscapes, and still lifes. The artist became famous, in particular, by creating images of teenage girls, painted in an exquisite and dreamy, often somewhat erotic manner. Like many other artists of the early 20th century, from Paul Gauguin to Pablo Picasso, Balthus believed that the child is a source of pure spirit, not yet shaped by societal expectations (Davenport, 1989). He rejected all accusations of depicting overt sexuality, commenting that his goal is to capture rather the unconscious natural eroticism of the soon-to-be women (Thrall, 1956).

In addition to a fairly large representation of already well-known Polish artists in Portuguese art collections, many contemporary Polish artists currently also live and actively exhibit their works in Portugal. For example, the "Salgadeiros" gallery actively cooperates with such Polish artists as Joanna Latka and Anna Stankiewicz.

Joanna Latka (1978) is a Polish engraver, who currently lives and works in Lisbon. In Portugal, she got a doctorate in art history and now teaches at Institute of Visual Arts on the Faculty of Design, Technology and Communication. The artist exhibited in more than thirty personal and about sixty group exhibitions in different parts of the world and now her works can be found in many private and public collections (Joanna Latka). The last exhibition of her works took place

in 2022 at Galeria Monumental, Lisboa, Portugal. Joanna Latka is also the co-founder of CONTRA-PROVA Printmaking Studio (2008), a non-profit printmaking association whose mission is to promote the production, promotion, and distribution of contemporary Portuguese graphics. The studio conducts group and private masterclasses in collagraphy, aquaforte, aquatints, linocuts, dry needle techniques, serigraphy, etc. Works created in this studio are also constantly demonstrated at various exhibitions.

Anna Stankiewicz's works are filled with human (mostly female) bodies, animals, and things that may seem insignificant, but each of them plays its role and tells its own story. The artist is fascinated by the combination of nature and civilization, depicting abandoned places where people once used to live, but now only nature reigns.

Both Polish artists admit that they have no problems with orders in Portugal: "The Portuguese are obsessed with paintings. Previously, they could spend thousands of euros just for canvas prints. Now they are investing more in graphics" (Arte Contemporanea). Unlike Joanna Latka, Anna Stankiewicz exhibits very actively in Poland as well, living between two countries.

In the CNAP gallery, one can find the works of the Polish artist Mariola Landowska. This Polish artist received an architectural education in Poland, then artistic – in Italy. The fascination with the culture of indigenous peoples led her to Morocco and Brazil. "Her painting is a combination of modern aesthetics and traditional figurative art, inspired by the works of primary art. The result is a strong expression of the works, which comes from the simplicity of the forms and the richness of the colors", noted Alicia Tilmann in the magazine "Szpak" (from the artist's website).

At the Foco Gallery, a Polish artist Mia Dudek is actively exhibiting. The work of this Warsaw artist, who currently lives in Lisbon, was directly influenced by mass housing construction and the global phenomenon of urbanization. After graduating from the London College of Communication and the Royal College of Art, Mia has exhibited around the world and been featured in numerous publications. Her self-published book MDAM was selected for the Anamorphosis Self-Published Photo Album Award and is currently in the collection of the MoMA library in New York. In her works, M. Dudek explores the concept of broken corporeality. The artist represents an abstract, fragmented body, separating and transforming it into new structures in her works (Mia Dudek).

The Polish-Irish artist – BerriBlue has been living and working in Portugal since 2015. Before the age of 13, the artist lived in Gdańsk with her mother, an

academic artist. Then the family moved to Ireland and later ended up in Porto, Portugal. Now the artist is known for her street art – murals and frescoes. In 2019, BerriBlue also started working with azulejos. As a newcomer to Portuguese culture, BerriBlue was able to interpret the traditional environment and approach it from her unique angle. She has sold several azulejo works to private collectors and participated in international auctions. The artist also works with such materials as plywood, newsprint, wrapping paper, and ceramics. The main themes of her work are mortality, sexuality, mental health, and personal identity (BerriBlue).

It is important to note that Portugal is also one of the mural capitals of the world. That's why it attracts many talented mural artists from various countries. Such Polish artists and teams as MOTS, NeSpoon, BEZT, Sainer, Sepe, and many others have already left their artistic marks in Portugal.

Also, such active Polish artists as Henryka Woerle, Katarzyna Gubernat, Jacek Krenz, Kasia Wrona, and others permanently live and work in Portugal.

The recent milestones of Polish-Portuguese artistic relations include the 5th Biennale of Graphic Art "Global Print", which took place from August to September 2022, in Portugal. 19 Polish artists took part in it, almost the same amount as at the previous year event. It is significant that Portugal, the host of

the biennale, had the same number of participants from their country. Although "Global Print" is one of the largest printing events in the world, it remains only the 2nd largest in Portugal. The largest is the Biennale of Douro, at the last event of which the works of 30 Polish artists were presented.

**The main conclusions and prospects for using the research results.** To summarize, it can be confidently stated that Polish art is prominently represented in Portuguese museums and galleries, private collections (CAM, Berardo Collection Museum, Serralves Collection, CNAP, FOCO, Salgadeiros, etc.), and the Polish artists are active participants in many art events in Portugal. One can even unexpectedly come across their works in various, sometimes unusual places, such as the installation of the sculpture "Fish" by the world-famous Magdalena Abakanowicz, which for some time was exhibited at the Orient metro station in Lisbon. Portugal appreciates and enjoys art, and Polish art has already established itself as high-quality and diverse. That is why we can expect that over time the presence and recognition of Polish art in Portugal will only increase.

The results of the study are the first attempt to generalize and systematize the presence of contemporary Polish art in Portugal. This theme has deep prospects for further research, especially in the context of active Polish-Portuguese artistic cooperation in recent years.

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