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AN ESCAPE FROM SOCIALIST REALISM. STATE-ORGANIZED OVERSEAS EXHIBITIONS AS THE ROAD TO FAME OF THE POLISH SCHOOL OF POSTERS

Introduction

The Polish School of Posters has been described in a number of academic publications. However, none of them seems to have exhausted this topic and none has even managed to provide a clear definition of this artistic phenomenon. Although the name 'Polish School of Posters' is constantly repeated in references to the experimental poster art of the Polish post-war period, it neither refers to a closed set of works nor is it represented by a clearly identifiable group of artists. There are several reasons why the term still escapes any scientific description. Firstly because, from the very beginning, the Polish School of Posters formed with no defined contours. Jan Lenica, who is credited to have invented this term, did not define it. What Lenica did was to narrow the Polish School of Posters to a certain group of artists who,

in some of their works, showed "a tendency to use visual metaphors and a reluctance to be purely decorative."¹ The second reason stems from the first and is related to the continuous circulation of this term in programmatic, critical, propagandistic and academic publications, none of which have clarified it as a concept with a clear definition.² Thirdly, it is because poster art was determined after the Second World War by many circumstances and historical events which have still not been fully investigated.

The fact is that the Polish post-war poster gained a worldwide reputation for its formal and stylistic diversity as well as for the development of a specific visual language and its use of a means of expression that derived from painting. The Polish School of Posters has become a globally recognised brand. It formed between 1947 and 1966, i.e. in the period immediately following the Second World War, which included the horrors

of Stalinism (1945-1953). The circumstances in which the Polish School of Posters emerged may seem surprising from today's perspective. After all, at that time Poland was one of the countries of the Eastern Bloc, where, following the example of the Soviet Union, the model of official art was centrally decreed in accordance with the guidelines of the doctrine of socialist realism. Still, Polish authorities - to a certain extent - allowed artistic experiments and graphic design not to have to conform to the assumptions of state propaganda. "Even in the worst period of Stalinism designers managed to use metaphors and allegories."³ The question that comes to mind is "how was this even possible?"⁴

The attempt to answer this question will be present throughout this article, however, more specific research questions will also be posed. The very fact that the Polish communist party allowed a certain amount of artistic freedom for poster artists does not explain the circumstances under which works they created had a chance to appear in a wider, international context. After all, if Polish posters had not been presented abroad, Polish poster art would not have gained international recognition. Therefore, it will be crucial for this paper to analyse why Polish post-war posters – particularly culture and film posters – gained worldwide attention. The support of the communist government was essential in this process. The state promoted Polish poster art in two ways: by organising a number of official exhibitions abroad, and by supporting the organisers of the 1st International Poster Biennale held in Warsaw in 1966. The relationship between cultural events at home and abroad is a fact that does not need to be proven, but its detailed characterisation still requires in-depth research. It seems obvious that without overseas exhibitions of Polish posters organized by the state, the International Poster Biennale would not have been established. On the other hand, without the Biennale, Polish poster art would, at best, remain a local phenomenon waiting for its future discoverer and would not have been appreciated by international audiences that quickly. However, the organisation of overseas poster exhibitions was not free from tensions and

the outcome of the "negotiations" between artists and the authorities could never be determined.

This paper consists of several parts. The first part is dedicated to the theoretical and practical sources of the term 'Polish School of Posters.' It presents the ways in which it has been understood so far. The second part is devoted to the role of overseas exhibitions in shaping the worldwide reputation of Polish posters. The third part describes the consequences of the worldwide recognition of the Polish School of Posters – the organisation of the First International Poster Biennale in Warsaw and the emigration of many poster artists. The fourth analyses the international reception of the Polish poster and presents the international relations of the community of Polish designers. The paper ends with a summary that attempts to indicate the connection between all previously described aspects which make up the characteristics of the reasons for the fame of the post-war Polish poster abroad.

The Polish School of Posters – Theoretical and Practical Sources of the Notion

The history of the Polish post-war poster begins in 1944. Together with the arrival of the Red Army that accompanied the Polish Army, "the activity of the Propaganda Poster Workshop of the Propaganda Department at the Main Political and Educational Management Board of the Polish Army intensified."⁵ In the following year, with the re-establishment of institutions and political and social life, culture posters – mainly for film and theatre - began to appear alongside propaganda posters. At this early period, Film Polski (a state-run organization that produced and distributed films) played an important role in creating favourable conditions that led to designing 'artistic posters.' In 1945, graphic designers like Erik Lipiński and Henryk Tomaszewski managed to negotiate a wide margin of freedom for designing film posters.⁶ This created the basis for an area of

publicly subsidised poster production which was not subject to the strict cultural policy guidelines of the emerging socialist state. Even after the adoption of the doctrine of socialist realism in Poland, which “was proclaimed after 1949 (...) by the then Minister of Art and Culture Włodzimierz Sokorski”⁷ culture posters remained – at least to some extent – the last stand of artistic freedom. This freedom meant that artists could follow their own formal-stylistic aspect and could also select the means of expression, the content and the interpretation of a given cultural event.

This early period is considered to precede the formation of the Polish School of Posters. Several events from that time, however, are worth mentioning. Already in that period, Polish posters were recognised abroad, which drew the attention of the authorities to this particular field. The most notable event of that period is Henryk Tomaszewski’s triumphant participation in the International Poster Exhibition in Vienna in 1948. The artist won five gold medals.⁸

A further periodisation of the so-called golden period of Polish post-war poster art is proposed by Andrzej Turowski:

The beginnings (...) of the Polish School of Posters can be traced to the years 1950-1952 and refer to classes taught by Mroszczak and Tomaszewski at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw and to works by Fangor. They all searched for a separate space for posters within the framework of the prevailing doctrine of socialist realism. The second wave began with the thaw of 1955-1956. Poster artists reached their peak period in the early 1960s. This period ended in 1964, when the Polish Communist Party curbed artistic freedom. That was the period of the greatest artistic achievements of Lenica and Młodożenec. Sometime later, Cieślewicz, Starowieyski and Świerzy followed suit.⁹

Many researchers consider the poster for *The Walls of Malapaga* created by Wojciech Fangor as the first work of the Polish School

of Posters. The ‘School’ can be understood as a certain section of the Polish post-war poster art (mostly culture posters, particularly film posters) that to a huge extent differed from the dominant design trends in post-war Poland. However, an abbreviated and metaphorical way of thinking in poster creation manifested itself earlier than 1952. Tadeusz Trepkowski’s poster for the film *Ostatni etap (The Last Stage)* from 1948 paved the way for future film posters. The author used a simple but very resonant metaphor of a broken poppy flower. The flower was presented against a striped background illustrating genocide in the concentration camps during World War II. The strategy of reductionism in conveying by means of a simple sign the essence of the work’s content would be very characteristic for the Polish poster in the later stages of its evolution.

Both works – by Trepkowski and by Fangor – allow us to understand the importance of the style of creation that derived from painting in the characteristics of the Polish School of Posters. Principles of this style were formed in the post-war period between 1945 and 1948, so even before the official introduction of socialist realism in Poland. In other words, artists that created the Polish School of Posters usually had professional backgrounds in painting. They mixed the aesthetics of painting with the conciseness and simplicity of posters. It allowed the development of features like painting gesture, linearity and vivid colours as well as the sense of individual personality, humour and imagination. The Polish poster made the distinction between a designer and an artist less clear. The line between them became blurred. Despite the similarity of the artistic means used, each of the artists belonging to this group developed their own individual style.

Zdzisław Schubert, Andrzej Turowski and Mariusz Knorowski claim that the Polish School of Posters ended in the mid-1960s. Their theory has a purely symbolic dimension, as, paradoxically, it was around that time when the Polish poster art reached its peak, which was reflected in the organization of the First International Poster Biennale in Warsaw in 1966. Of course, painting-

like posters using metaphors did not cease to be created overnight. Schubert, Turowski and Knorowski refer rather to the advent of new, different tendencies in design connected with the introduction of montage and photography. Leading artists representing new trends were Marek Freudenreich, Leszek Hołdanowicz and Bronisław Zelek.

Overseas Exhibitions Organised by the State and the Recognition of the Polish School of Posters

The first overseas successes of post-war Polish poster art were not closely linked to the cultural policy of the state. Although the involvement of political structures in the selection of the national representation for the already mentioned International Poster Exhibition in Vienna in 1948 cannot be completely unnoticed, Tomaszewski's success was the result of his own talent and not of state patronage. For the Polish Communist Party it was a clear sign that Polish artists have significant, internationally recognized achievements in the field of poster design. Worldwide professional magazines like *Graphis*, *Art and Industry*¹⁰ and *Modern Publicity*¹¹ published favourable texts describing the phenomenon of Polish poster art. They juxtaposed Polish posters with posters created in the West that were confined by the restriction of 'commercial' regimes. As a result, Polish authorities expressed more interest in Polish poster art and began active promotional campaigns abroad. As early as 1949, Polish posters were exhibited in Prague (*Výstava polského plakátu*, Uměleckoprůmyslové Muzeum, 1949). It was merely a small taste of the promotional actions of 1950, however, when exhibitions of Polish posters were held in Berlin (*Ausstellung Polnische Plakate*, Kunstbibliothek Berlin, 1950), Brussels (*Affiches polonaises*, Palais des Beaux-Arts, 1950), Budapest (*Lengyel Plakátművészet*, Kiallítás, Iparművészeti Muzeumban, 1950), Bucharest (*Afişului Polonez*, Sala Ministerului Artelor, 1950),¹² Oslo (Polske

Plakater, place of the exhibition unknown, 1950),¹³ (Utställning av Polska Affischer i Stockholm, Kulturhuset, 1950) and Vienna (*Polnische Plakate*, Ausstellung in der Wiener Kunsthalle, 1950). Exhibitions were first held in the capital city and later in other parts of the country. For example, the exhibition held in Berlin in January was the inauguration of the German tournée. By late March, Polish posters were presented in other East German cities like Leipzig, Halle and Magdeburg. Between April 1950 and December 1951, posters were exhibited also in West Germany – in Baden-Baden, Konstanz, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt am Main, Hamburg, Nuremberg, Munich, Stuttgart, Mannheim and Wiesbaden.¹⁴

There was a steep decrease in the number of exhibitions in the years 1951-1953. This fact can be linked to the temporary tightening of the state's cultural policy aimed at strengthening the dogmas of socialist realism. However, through the exhibitions organised in 1950, Polish authorities managed to achieve some of the goals of their international policy. Above all, the communist party wanted to soften its image before the signing of the agreements approving Poland's western border on the Oder river.

However, the idea of exporting Polish poster art abroad was quickly revived. As early as 1954, the Polish authorities made active efforts in this regard. Polish posters were exhibited at official overseas exhibitions in Copenhagen (*Den Danske Plakatudstilling* Kobenhavn, place of the exhibition unknown, 1954), Moscow (*Wystawka polskich kinoplakatow*, place of the exhibition unknown, 1954), Pardubice (*Vystava soucasneho polskeho plakatu*, place of the exhibition unknown, 1954) and Prague (*Vystava polsky plakát*, Dom Uměleckeho Průmyslu, 1954). In 1955, exhibitions of Polish posters organised by the Central Bureau of Artistic Exhibitions (a national agency founded to organise artistic events under the state patronage) could be viewed by the public in Brussels (*L'Affiche polonaise*, *Poolse Affiches*, Palais des Beaux-Arts), Bucharest (*Expositia Afişul in Republica Popolara Polona*), Kiev (*Wystawka polskiego obrazotwórczego mistjctwa*, place of the

exhibition unknown), Minsk (Wystawka polskaga wyjawlenczaga mastactwa, place of the exhibition unknown), Tournai (L'Affiche polonaise, place of the exhibition unknown) and Washington (An Exhibition of Polish Posters, Polish Embassy in Washington). The year 1956 brought exhibitions in Budapest (Lengyel Plakat-művészeti Kiállítás, Nemzeti Szalon), Buenos Aires (Affiches Polacos, Galeria de Arte Rose Marie), Göteborg (Polsk Affisch Konst, place of the exhibition unknown), Mexico City (100 Carteles de la Nueva Polonia en Mexico, Galería Pemex), New Delhi (Polish Art Exhibition, Lalit Kala Akademi), Nuremberg (Polnische Plakate, Stadtarchiv Nürnberg), Vienna (Das polnische Plakat, Museum für Angewandte Kunst) and a couple of Italian cities (Mostra Cartelloni Cinematografici Polacchi / L'affiche polonaise du cinéma). Between the years 1957-1970, another 45 exhibitions of Polish poster art were organized abroad under the auspices of the Polish government.¹⁵ Apart from Europe and the US, Polish posters were exhibited in New Delhi (*Exhibition of Polish Posters*, The Indian Academy of Fine Arts, 1959), Rio de Janeiro (*Cartazes poloneses*, Museu de Arte Moderna, 1959), Beirut (*L'Exposition d'affiches polonaises*, place of the exhibition unknown, 1961), Havana (*El Cartel Polaco*, Palacio de Bellas Artes, 1962), three cities in New Zealand: Wellington (National Art Gallery Wellington, 4-24 February 1963), Christchurch (Robert McDougall Art Gallery Christchurch, 18-31 March 1963) and Auckland (Dunedin Public Library, 22 April - 5 May 1963; Auckland City Art Gallery, 27 May-16 June 1963), Mexico City (*El Arte de Cartel Polaco*, Museo Nacional de Arte Moderna, 1964) and Veracruz (*El Arte del Cartel Polaco*, Galeria del Teatro del Estado, 1964), Tokyo (*Posters of Poland*, State Modern Art Museum, 1966) and Ankara (*Polonyagravürveafissergisi*, GüvenMatbaasi, 1967).

The list only includes exhibitions that were accompanied by a printed catalogue. Actually, the number of such events was higher. However, trying to provide the exact number of exhibitions is less important than analysing their content, functions and trying to assess their contribution

to establishing the worldwide fame of post-war Polish poster art.

A closer look at these exhibitions and the works presented there leads to the conclusion that:

(...) in the international exhibition practice [Poland] pursued a strategy of differentiation. The catalogues of Hungarian and Romanian exhibitions contain almost no film posters by Eryk Lipiński and Henryk Tomaszewski of international renown, especially for French, English or American films. In contrast, these two graphic designers were represented at exhibitions in Brussels, Oslo and Stockholm with thirteen and fourteen works respectively. This means that the exhibitions in the socialist countries were more closely aligned with the unified artistic doctrine of their own country within the communist bloc, while the exhibitions in the non-socialist countries were more thematically and stylistically diverse.¹⁶

Regardless of the proportion of cultural and propaganda posters presented at each exhibition, however, all of these presentations combined have contributed to building a worldwide brand of Polish poster art. It should come as no surprise, then, that Polish poster artists very quickly began to be individually invited to participate in review exhibitions abroad, by the world's leading cultural institutions. One example is the presentation of works by Roman Cieśliewicz, Jan Lenica and Wojciech Zamecznik held in 1961 in the New York Museum of Modern Art at the exhibition entitled *Film Poster*.¹⁷ What contributed to the positive reception of their works, was the fact that posters were mostly previews of foreign films familiar to American audiences.

The Opposite Side of Cultural Policy – the Warsaw Poster Biennale and Emigration

The rising prominence of Polish posters, which was the ‘flagship’ of the state's cultural policy during the People's Republic of Poland, translated directly into the recognition of individual artists as well as into the establishment and development of contacts between artists in Poland and abroad. The rising demand led to two clear tendencies that somehow stood in opposition to the ideas behind organizing official exhibitions abroad. It is because they resulted in the integration and strengthening of the community of poster designers in Poland and in some members of the Polish School of Posters leaving the country.

Strengthening the Polish community of poster designers led to the idea of establishing in Poland an international event dedicated to artistic posters. Successful negotiations between artists and the authorities resulted in a compromise. It allowed for the launching in Warsaw, in 1966, of the 1st International Biennale of Poster. This event was a celebration of art but did not really suit the Communist Party, the organizers faced many obstacles:

Let us mention that perhaps even during the communist times there were thoughts of stopping the event. No wonder. Many of the things going on in the posters and displayed in Warsaw at the time might have annoyed the communists, especially as crowds flocked to this particular event every time. It was for these reasons that one of the posters about Amnesty International by Roman Cieślewicz was once not allowed to be exhibited.¹⁸

Marszałek's observations reveal a certain paradox. The establishment of the International Biennale broke the state's monopoly on organizing poster exhibitions. Contrary to state-managed exhibitions abroad, exhibitions of international

posters in Poland could not be fully controlled. The organization of the Biennale in Poland turned the tables. Artists co-decided on the selection of artists and guests. Suddenly, artists coming from the West were allowed to exhibit their works in Poland. Among them were some Polish artists that had emigrated, partly due to political reasons. Presenting works of foreign artists opened Poland to content that was not fully in line with the official political agenda of the socialist state. Such a situation posed a threat to the Polish Communist Party. There were numerous examples of censorship. A poster by Roman Cieślewicz for Amnesty International was not exhibited due to the ban on the establishment of NGOs in the Eastern Bloc. However, not all liberal influences could be stopped.

From the artists that formed the Polish School of Posters, the first ones to leave the country were Wojciech Fangor (1961), Roman Cieślewicz (1963) and Jan Lenica¹⁹ (1963). However, the real emigration wave of Polish poster artists began in the 1970s. Among the artists who decided to emigrate were: Waldemar Świerzy (1970), Wiktor Górka (1970) and Bronisław Zelek (1970). The younger generation of artists also made use of the reputation of Polish poster art. One of them was Krzysztof Lenk who emigrated in 1979. Although he gained recognition as a creator of diagrams, he also created some excellent film posters commissioned by state agencies.

In 1970, Waldemar Świerzy, Wiktor Górka and Bronisław Zelek left for Cuba on a contract between friendly socialist states. They were to teach design workshops for graphic artists working for the Cuban political bureau. However, they did not stay there long, as they found it difficult to adjust to the reality of Fidel Castro's revolutionary state. Instead, they relocated to Mexico where Górka decided to stay. Świerzy spent a few months there and went to live in Florida. Zelek returned to Europe and decided to settle in Vienna. What is interesting is the fact that most of the artists that emigrated taught, at least for some time, at art universities. For example, Jan Lenica was a lecturer at Harvard University, Cambridge (USA) in 1974. He later served as the

head of the Faculty of Animated Film at a university in Kassel (1979–85) and worked as a professor at the Higher School of the Arts in Berlin (1986–1994).²⁰ In the years 1973–75, Roman Cieślewicz was the head of the Studio of Visual Forms at Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs in Paris, and in the years 1975–96 he served as the head of the diploma atelier of graphic arts at Ecole Supérieure des Arts Graphique.²¹ Wojciech Fangor was, in the years 1965–1966, a lecturer at Bath Academy of Art in Corsham (Wiltshire, UK). Between 1966 and 1999, Fangor lived in the US where he taught in leading universities: Fairleigh Dickinson University, Madison, N.J. (1966–1983) and the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts (1967–1968).²²

For many years, Górka taught at Mexico's leading universities, for which he was later awarded a special prize by the Mexican Biennale of Poster for his contributions in the development of Mexican art of design.²³ Świerzy established commercial contacts that resulted in commissions for cartoon and poster presentations with gangster motifs in film genres.²⁴

Apart from the aforementioned poster artists, many others decided to leave Poland, e.g. Jan Sawka (he lived in France from 1976, and in 1985 relocated to the US), Andrzej Krajwski (left for the US in 1985) and Rosław Szaybo (in the years 1966–88 he resided and worked in London, and upon returning to Poland started working at the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts).

In the context of these successes of Polish designers in exile, one could risk saying that official foreign exhibitions of posters were, for them, a ticket to freedom. However, it is worth mentioning that most of them maintained contact with the Polish design milieu. They continued to carry out domestic commissions for posters and other types of graphic design, including book and record covers. Some like Wiktor Górka would regularly visit Poland and engage in numerous initiatives. They can therefore be viewed as unofficial ambassadors of the Polish poster abroad. They played a key role in reaffirming the reputation of the Polish School of Posters.

The Polish School of Posters from the International Perspective

The diaspora of Polish poster artists tightened cooperation with foreign artistic circles, which facilitated contacts for the organizers of the next editions of the Warsaw Biennale. Poster artists that emigrated regularly participated in exhibitions held in Poland. Many of them won prizes and distinctions at the Biennale in the following years. For example, Roman Cieślewicz was awarded a prize at the 5th International Biennale of Poster in Warsaw in 1974, even though he was a member of the jury at that event.²⁵ Jan Lenica, who also lived abroad, was on the jury of the Seventh Poster Biennale.

Poster artists that chose to stay in Poland constituted the backbone for a network of artistic and project relations. Emigres that taught abroad presented works of Polish poster artists to their students which developed interest in the Polish poster not only among poster artists but also among young creators who had not yet graduated. This interest was not purely theoretical; on the contrary, it resulted – perhaps surprisingly from today's perspective – in a search for opportunities to come to Poland to participate directly in the academic classes conducted by renowned Polish poster designers. One of the artists who achieved the status of a mythical teacher from behind the Iron Curtain was Henryk Tomaszewski. He drew foreign students like a magnet. Tomaszewski was the head of one of the two studios of posters established at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw in 1952. He remained an active academic teacher until 1984. Throughout the thirty years of his teaching career, he cooperated with many generations of designers. His students were popular poster artists like Mieczysław Wasilewski, Jan Młodożeniec and Maciej Urbaniec. They continued to develop the tradition of Polish graphic design in the field of the poster.

“The fame of the Polish poster and the international recognition of poster artists started to draw foreign trainees to the Academy of Fine

Arts in Warsaw, just like before the war.”²⁶ The most numerous group were the French. The first one to arrive was Michel Quarez in 1961. “Upon returning to France he encouraged other talented graphic designers to come to Poland.”²⁷ Among other French artists that came to Warsaw were: Alain le Quernec, Bruno Koper, Thierry Surfis, Guy Mocquet and Vanessa Vermillon. In the 1960s, artists like Pierre Bernard and Gérard Paris-Clavel (founder of the group Grapus) and many others followed in their footsteps. Andrzej Klimowski deserves a special mention as he came to Warsaw from London twice: in the academic year 1973/74 and 1974/75. He was a son of Polish emigrants. He was considered to have continued the traditions of the Polish Poster school abroad although he did not grow up in the reality of communist Poland. Upon his return to the UK, Klimowski spent years teaching at the Royal College of Art in London. As Zdzisław Schubert observes:

Klimowski quickly adapted to Warsaw and began to design posters for films and theatre plays. Before he left Poland in 1980, Klimowski created dozens of works. Even after going back to London he never broke ties with Polish publishers and from time to time we can see his posters in the streets. His works do not clearly show traces of fascination with works by Tomaszewski or Lenica, however, they clearly strike a dialogue with the works of Cieśliewicz through the similarities between matter and the use of photomontage.²⁸

It was not only Klimowski that achieved significant success after returning to his country of residence. Most of the more than 60 trainees of Tomaszewski were listed among world's leading designers. Their success only drew more people to the Polish School of Posters.

Many of the trainees, after returning to their countries, quickly rose to the top of the designers in their circles. However, putting their posters together leads to a surprising

reflection: despite all the individual styles of each of them, the spirit or atmosphere of Tomaszewski's and Mroszczak's studio emanates from almost all of these works (except Klimowski, who has already been mentioned, but this is a special case). We are dealing here not only with the same kind of thinking – which is understandable – but also with a cheerful, sometimes even humorous or slightly ironic tone – a feature so characteristic of Polish poster art.²⁹

Former trainees of Tomaszewski maintained their ties to Poland. This is especially visible in the list of people who joined the jury of the subsequent editions of the International Biennale of Poster in Warsaw.³⁰ In 1988, Gerard Paris Clavel (France) became a member of this prestigious jury, in 1994 Pierre Bernard (France), in 1998 Alain Le Quernec (France), and in 2000 Andrzej Klimowski (Great Britain). However, the twentieth edition of the Warsaw event was particularly rich in former Tomaszewski trainees. The jury included: Thierry Sarfis (France), Marjatt Itkonen (Finland), Radovan Jenko (Slovenia) and Karel Mišek (Czech Republic). The only juror who did not have an internship at the famous poster studio of the Warsaw Academy of Fine Arts was Marcin Mroszczak, who represented Poland but defended his diploma at Tomaszewski's studio. These examples show how important the reputation of the Polish poster had become.

Meanwhile, the tendency for Polish graphic artists to leave the country continued into the 1970s. Interestingly, many of them found a common language with foreign artists who had completed an apprenticeship with Tomaszewski. One example is Ewa Maruszczyńska, who left for France immediately after her studies, where she later founded the graphic design studio Zanzibar't together with the previously mentioned Thierry Sarfis. We may risk a claim that the interest in Polish design among foreigners was reflected in the reputation of those who left Poland for other countries. It significantly facilitated their start in the new environment.

Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to present the role of official state-funded foreign exhibitions of post-war Polish posters organized in the years 1947-1970 in the development of the worldwide reputation of the so-called Polish School of Posters. Organizing exhibitions in cities around the world made the participating artists more popular. Those exhibitions also allowed the development of contacts with foreign artists, which contributed to the creation of the first worldwide event dedicated to poster art. The 1st International Biennale of Poster held in 1966 contributed to the wide scope of artistic freedom in poster creation in Poland. By treating posters as works of art, the awareness of design circles abroad was awoken. As a consequence, Polish creators achieved the possibility of emigrating on beneficial terms. When they arrived at their destinations, they did not share the fate of accidental travellers, but were able to continue their artistic work. What's more, they continued to work on the improving of the reputation of Polish poster art, inspiring the idea of 'artistic design' in masses of students, many of whom later came to Poland, one of the Eastern Bloc countries behind the proverbial Iron Curtain, for internships with the legendary masters led by Tomaszewski and Wasilewski. Such internships had many outcomes. Artists who participated in them transferred the 'Polish' way of thinking into their national artistic circles and maintained contact with the Polish artists, submitted entries for the following editions of the Biennale and accepted invitations to be members of the jury.

Polish graphic artists coined an attractive slogan that inspired artists around the world to create their identities. The slogan goes: 'posters are works of art.' It expressed the conviction about the value of individual style that could be seen even in works created on commission. What's more, commissioned works allowed the creators to interpret the topic in an individual way. From the national point of view, good reputation and fame earned abroad by the creators of the Polish School of Posters consolidated achievements in the field of

artistic freedom. As posters became an attractive tool of propaganda that could be exported by the People's Republic of Poland, Polish poster artists, unlike their peers from other fields of art, did not need to strictly follow the rules of state's cultural policy. They were able to escape socialist realism. Artists who decided to escape in a physical way (to emigrate), not only defected formally, but also ideologically and organizationally.

Both dimensions of the escape from socialist realism find a common denominator in the term 'Polish School of Posters' – a term that has no clear-cut framework, although it functions as an axiom in many studies. Official exhibitions abroad and the emigration of Polish poster artists seem to have had a direct impact on the international recognition of the Polish poster art, even though they remain in clear ideological opposition to each other. This opposition is probably the reason why these two elements of the history of the Polish poster art have been described separately. This paper, however, tries to demonstrate the existence of a strong direct relationship between them – a feedback loop.

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Notes

- ¹ Jan Lenica, "Polska szkoła plakatu," *Polska*, no. 1, 1955, 11. All the translations from Polish sources by Mateusz Bieczyński.
- ² Por. Mariusz Knorowski, "Polska szkoła plakatu – rzecz o wolności myślenia i szczególnym rodzaju synergii," *Teologia Polityczna* published electronically 11.06.2019 <https://teologiapolityczna.pl/polska-szkola-plakatu>, accessed 28.07.2022; Zdzisław Schubert, "Plakat," in *Odwilż. Sztuka ok. 1956 roku*, Edited by Piotr Piotrowski (Poznań: MNP, 1996), 121-28; Andrzej Turowski, "Polska szkoła plakatu' en question," (2004), Typescript.
- ³ Krzysztof Lenk, *Krótkie teksty o sztuce projektowania* (Gdańsk: Słowo/obraz Terytoria, 2011), 23.
- ⁴ Katarzyna Matul posed this question in the title of her book on the organisation of the 1st International Poster Biennale in 1966 as she pondered the points of view of artists and authorities, see: Katarzyna Matul, *Jak to było możliwe? O powstawaniu Międzynarodowego Biennale Plakatu w Warszawie* (Kraków: Universitas, 2015).
- ⁵ Schubert, "Plakat," 121.
- ⁶ Krzysztof Dydo, *Polski plakat filmowy. 100 lecie kina w Polsce = Polish film poster: 100th anniversary of the cinema in Poland* (Kraków: Krzysztof Dydo-Galeria Plakatu, 1996), 37-38. Exhib. cat.
- ⁷ Schubert, "Plakat," 122.
- ⁸ Lidia Becela, ed., *Who's who in Poland: a biographical directory comprising about 4.000 entries on leading personalities in Poland and information on major state, political, diplomatic, scientific and artistic institutions, and organizations* (Warszawa: Interpress, 1992), 900.
- ⁹ Turowski, "Polska szkoła plakatu' en question," 2.
- ¹⁰ Charles Rosner, "Posters for Art Exhibitions and Films: A Lesson from Poland," *Art and Industry* 46, no. 278 (1949): 52.
- ¹¹ David Crowley, "An art of independence and wit: the reception of the Polish Poster School in Western Europe," in *100 lat polskiej sztuki plakatu / 100th Anniversary of Polish Poster Art* (Kraków: BWA, 1993), 25-29.
- ¹² *Catalogul expoziției afișului polonez*, Sala Ministerului Artelor, București, 1950, exhib. cat.
- ¹³ *Katalog den Polske Plakatutstilling*, Oslo, 1950, exhib. cat.
- ¹⁴ Jeannine Harder, "Polnische Plakatkunst als Medium transnationaler Kunstkontakte und Kulturpolitik im Ost-West-Konflikt," *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, published electronically, accessed 29.07.2022, <https://www.europa.clio-online.de/quelle/id/q63-28529>.
- ¹⁵ In 1957 exhibitions were held in Berlin, Helsinki, London, Stockholm, Zagreb; in 1958 in: Karlove Vary; in 1959: in New Delhi and Rio de Janeiro; in 1960 in: Amsterdam, Budapest and Ottawa; in 1961 in: Beirut, Mannheim and New Delhi; in 1962 in: Havana, Munich and Ostrava; in 1963 in: Copenhagen, Moscow, Hertogenbosch and Wellington; in 1964 in: Belgrade, Mexico City, Rome, Vera Cruz; in 1965 in: Frankfurt am Main, Köln, Oberhausen, Hertogenbosch; in 1966 in: Basel, West Berlin, Edinburgh, Stockholm, Tokyo and Washington; in 1967 in: Ankara, Hamburg, Innsbruck and La Chaux-de-Fonds; in 1968 in: Barcelona, London and Mexico City; in 1969 in Parma, in 1970: in Turin.
- ¹⁶ Harder, "Polnische Plakatkunst."
- ¹⁷ MoMA exhibition entitled *Film Poster* was on display from 14 December 1960 to 23 February 1961, see: https://www.moma.org/collection/works/5000?artist_id=5894&page=1&sov_referrer=artist, accessed: 12 may 2021.
- ¹⁸ Grzegorz Marszałek. "O plakacie, reklamie i wolności." Interviewed by Karol Szymoniak. *Nurt*, no. 8 (1995): 4.
- ¹⁹ Marcin Giżycki, "Jan Lenica," in *Piękni XX-wieczni. Polscy projektanci graficy*, ed. Jacek Mrowczyk (Kraków: 2+3D, 2017), 232.
- ²⁰ Ewa Czerniakowska and Tadeusz Kujawski, *Jan Lenica – Labirynt* (Poznań: MNP, 2002), 254. Exhib. cat.
- ²¹ Joseph S. Czestochowski and Janina Fijałkowska, *Contemporary Polish Poster in Full Color* (New York: Dover Publications, 1979), iv.
- ²² Ewa Gorzadek, "Wojciech Fangor," *Culture.pl*, published electronically 12.2004, accessed 29.07.2022, <https://culture.pl/en/artist/wojciech-fangor>.
- ²³ Ian Haydn Smith, *Selling the movie: the Art of the Film Poster* (London: White Lion Publishing, 2018), 173.
- ²⁴ Ewa Gorzadek, "Waldemar Świerzy," *Culture.pl*, published electronically 04.2006, accessed 29.07.2022, <https://culture.pl/en/artist/waldemar-swierzy>.
- ²⁵ "Jurorzy Międzynarodowego Biennale Plakatu w Warszawie w latach 1966-2012," accessed 29.07.2022, <http://www.postermuseum.pl/biennale/jurorzy/>.
- ²⁶ Zdzisław Schubert, *Mistrzowie i uczniowie plakatu* (Warszawa: Przedsiębiorstwo Wydawnicze Rzeczpospolita, 2008), 139.
- ²⁷ Anna Grabowska-Konwent, "Henryk Tomaszewski," in *Piękni XX-wieczni. Polscy projektanci graficy*, ed. Jacek Mrowczyk (Kraków: 2+3D, 2017), 169.
- ²⁸ Schubert, *Mistrzowie i uczniowie plakatu*, 145.
- ²⁹ *Ibidem*, 146.
- ³⁰ "Jurorzy Międzynarodowego Biennale Plakatu w Warszawie w latach 1966-2012."

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