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Edward Trojanowski: The Search for Style in Early 20th-century Furniture Design in Poland

Three sources of inspiration are discernible in early 20th-century Polish furniture design and especially in the output of artist-designers associated with the Polish Applied Art Association (Towarzystwo Polska Sztuka Stosowana, henceforward: TPSS), namely, folk art, the historical styles, and the modernistic/geometrical current.¹ Edward Trojanowski's oeuvre in that area combines all these three tendencies and embodies the evolution of Polish approach to designing furniture; hence it may serve to illustrate the history of Polish furniture design in the early 20th century.

Trojanowski was born in the year 1873 in Koło. In the period 1892–1897 he studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in St. Petersburg, for the first two years as a non-enrolled student. He attended, among others, courses in the composition of historical and battle scenes, and one in nature study. In the autumn of 1897 he left for Munich, and from there for Paris, where he studied at the Académie Julian under the supervision of Jean-Paul Laurens. In 1898 he travelled in Italy. From 1900 onwards he lived in Cracow, where he soon joined the current of artistic life; he became a member of the “Sztuka” Association of Polish Artists, from 1901 he taught at the private School of Decorative Art directed by Jan Bukowski and Włodzimierz Tetmajer. In 1905 he moved to Warsaw, where he taught applied art (1906–1920) and decorative painting (1922–1930) at the School of Fine Arts. Concurrently he was the art director of Wierzbicki Printing Press and Lithographic Studio. He exhibited his works at the Association of the Friends of Fine Arts in Cracow and the Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Warsaw, as well as abroad; the display of his

1 A. Kostrzyńska-Miłosz, *Polskie meble 1918–1939. Forma – funkcja – technika* [Polish furniture 1918–1939. Form – function – technology], Warsaw, 2005, pp. 25–32. The article was written in the framework of the “The Fathers of Polish Design. Polish Applied Art Association. Interior architecture and furniture design” research project, financed by the National Science Centre (2015/17/D/HS2/01215).

works at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925 was a considerable success. He died on 22 May 1930 in Warsaw.²

Trojanowski's output is very varied. He painted cityscapes in oil (e.g. *The Planty Park in Cracow*, 1902, National Museum in Warsaw), produced lithographs (e.g. *Wawel*, 1903, National Museum in Warsaw), designed wall paintings and stained glass windows (wall paintings and the altar in the church in Małkinia, wall paintings in the chapel in Gostynin, stained glass windows in the church in Lubraniec, design for a stained glass window in the Szafraniec Chapel on Wawel Hill)³.

Together with Jerzy Warchałowski, Włodzimierz Tetmajer, Karol Tichy, Józef Czajkowski and Stanisław Goliński, Trojanowski belongs to the circle of the founders of the Polish Applied Art Association, instituted on 8 June 1901 in Cracow.⁴ Later, he was a member of the Association's Temporary Committee, and then its Subdivision, Industrial Section and Research Section.⁵ Together with Warchałowski, he edited the first nine issues of *Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Polskiej Sztuki Stosowanej. Materiały* [TPSS Publishing House. Materials]. He was also involved in the organisation of the Association's exhibitions in Cracow (1902), Warsaw (1902), the Printing Exhibition in Cracow (1904) and the later exhibition in Warsaw (1908).⁶

After the year 1901 Trojanowski focused on applied art. He was a successful graphic designer. He designed the covers for two issues of *Materiały* for the TPSS (no. 1, 6), the membership card for the year 1902/03, postcards, posters for the Printing Exhibition in Cracow (1904) and the Exhibition of Modern Fabrics and Ceramics, also in Cracow (1905), the cover for the Printing Exhibition catalogue and some of its decoration. He designed covers for books and volumes of poetry,⁷ as well as exhibition posters and commercial bills.⁸ He participated in graphic design contests; in 1905 he won the first prize at the TPSS contest for the logo for the

2 L. Skalska-Miecznik, *Polscy uczniowie Akademii Sztuk Pięknych w Petersburgu w XIX i na początku XX wieku. Katalog wystawy* [Polish students of the Fine Arts Academy in St. Petersburg in the 19th and early 20th century. Exhibition catalogue], Warsaw, 1989, p. 157.

3 Association of the Friends of Fine Arts Archive, materials pertaining to Edward Trojanowski.

4 *Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1901–02* [Report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1901–02], Cracow, 1903, p. 3.

5 *Ibid.*, p. 4.

6 *Ibid.*, p. 18; III. *Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1904* [3rd report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1904], Cracow 1905, s. 13; VII. *sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie R.1908* [7th report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1908], Cracow, 1909, p. 5.

7 Book cover designs for, e.g., J. Lemański, *Proza ironiczna* [Ironie prose], Warsaw, 1904; S. Żeromski, *Szyfowe prace* [Labours of Sisyphus], Lvov, 1905; G. Daniłowski, *Na wyspie* [On an island], Warsaw 1907; J. Lemański, *Noc i dzień* [Night and day], Warsaw, 1910.

8 Posters for, e.g., Wilhelm Lipschitz's wine shop (1904), General Bookshop in Lvov, Jan Stanisławski's posthumous exhibition in Zachęta (1907), exhibition of the "Złoty Róg" Association (1911), exhibition of the "Sztuka" Association of Polish Artists in Zachęta (1912), the *Village and Small Town* exhibition of Polish architecture (1915), *Poland in Pictures* photographic exhibition (1916).

Gebethner & Wolff publishing house.⁹ He presented his prints at the TPSS exhibition in Warsaw in 1902,¹⁰ at the *Printing Exhibition*¹¹ and the Association's exhibition in Warsaw in 1908.¹²

In addition, Trojanowski designed kilims, produced by the firms of Włodzimierz Pohlman in Lipnica, Antonina Sikorska in Czernichów and Konstancja Lipkowska in Nowy Sącz. They were shown at exhibitions in Warsaw in 1902,¹³ in Cracow in 1903¹⁴ and 1905,¹⁵ as well as at the Austrian exhibition in London in 1906.¹⁶ Trojanowski undertook to design a very broad range of artistic craft objects. In 1903 he won a design contest for a net curtain for Szlekier, Wydźga & Weyer in Warsaw.¹⁷ In 1902, at the TPSS shows in Cracow and Warsaw, he exhibited "small chest painted in folk motifs", a "screen made in the appliqué broadcloth technique" and "leather sleeves for books".¹⁸

Furniture design and interior design were among the more important areas of Trojanowski's activity. He frequently exhibited designs for furniture and interiors, as well as finished projects, at exhibitions or entered them into contests. His design for bedroom furniture was exhibited at the TPSS show in Cracow in 1902.¹⁹ Still in the same year the Warsaw public saw some more of his designs: for dining room furniture, for wicker furniture, as well as a wall decoration and a shelf for a children's room made in the Cracow workshop of Józef Zabrze.²⁰ Unfortunately the Warsaw press failed to comment on these designs; but Trojanowski's works awarded, also

9 IV. *Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana w Krakowie r. 1905* [4th report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1905], Cracow, 1906, p. 8.

10 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej* [Catalogue of the 2nd exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow], Warsaw, 1902, pp. 41, 43.

11 *Wystawa drukarska urządzona staraniem Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w dawnym pałacu hr. Czapskich w Krakowie od 24 grudnia 1904 do 10 lutego 1905 r.* [Printing exhibition organised by the Polish Applied Art Association at the former Count Czapski Palace in Cracow from 24 Dec. 1904 to 10 Feb. 1905], Cracow, 1904, pp. 48, 49, 60.

12 *Wystawa krakowskiego Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w gmachu Towarzystwa Zachęty Sztuk Pięknych w Warszawie luty 1908 r.* [Exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow held at the "Zachęta" Society for the Encouragement of Fine Arts edifice in Warsaw, Feb. 1908], Cracow, 1908, p. 18.

13 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 39.

14 *Katalog VII. wystawy Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich „Sztuka” i II. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”* [Catalogue of the 7th exhibition of the "Sztuka" Association of Polish Artists and 2nd exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], Cracow, 1903, p. 26.

15 *Katalog nowożytnych tkanin i wyrobów ceramicznych* [Catalogue of modern fabrics and pottery], Cracow, 1905, p. 49.

16 *Imperial-Royal Austrian Exhibition London, Earls Court 1906*, London, 1906, p. 51.

17 *II. sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1903* [2nd report of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow 1903], Cracow, 1904, p. 9.

18 *Katalog I. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”* [Catalogue of the 1st exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], Cracow 1902, pp. 29, 30; *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 41.

19 *Katalog I. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”...*, p. 29.

20 *Katalog II-jej wystawy krakowskiego Towarzystwa Sztuki Stosowanej...*, p. 37.

in 1902, at the Zachęta contest for the design of a house and furniture in a “native style” were mentioned with evident admiration. His designs for a clock, a table and a credenza won a prize of 105 roubles.²¹ When in 1903 the TPSS received a donation of 4000 crowns from a private sponsor, a part of this sum paid for the making of a pair of chairs designed by Trojanowski.²² In the same year the designer sent in some drawings, answering the TPSS petition for designs of furniture for any type of room. The TPSS bought a design for a chair, paying Trojanowski 40 crowns.²³ Also, considering that he was still feeling his way in the area of furniture design, he could not pass up the opportunity to show his works at the exhibition co-organised by the TPSS and the “Sztuka” Association of Polish Artists in 1903. The designs were for a shelf and a chair, both made in the workshop of Józef Zabrze.²⁴ He also availed himself of the subsequent opportunities to present his works: at the Exhibition of Modern Fabrics and Ceramics (1905) he presented a cupboard made in the Ligęza Brothers workshop in Cracow.²⁵ In the same year, at a small-scale exhibition of works entered into a contest held in the Czapski Palace, he displayed a desk and a bookshelf. They were presented outside the contest, because Trojanowski was a member of its jury.²⁶ Towards the end of the year he and other members of the TPSS were commissioned to design the restaurant at the Old Theatre in Cracow. Trojanowski’s task was to design the furniture and decoration for the larger dining hall on the ground floor.

Starting from the 1905/1906 academic year, Trojanowski was employed as the second professor of Applied Art at the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw.²⁷ Yet even though he moved to Warsaw, he did not sever his ties with Cracow and the TPSS. In 1908 he sent in a design for a set of bedroom furniture for a contest held by the Museum of Technology and Industry. He won the second prize; the first went to Karol Tichy for a design that entered the annals of Polish design.²⁸ In addition, he took part in the Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors in a Garden Environment co-organised by the TPSS in 1912, designing a set of furniture for a bedroom in a suburban villa. His move to Warsaw brought him several commissions for pieces of furniture and for entire interiors. For Władysław Reymont, he made a set of furniture for a study; for Maria Papieska, a set of bedroom furniture. Some of these pieces were shown at the TPSS exhibition at Zachęta in 1908. Also in Warsaw, he designed interiors for the café at Grand Hotel and the Skating Rink in the Luxembourg Gallery, the curtain for the Chochlik Cabaret in the Swiss Valley park, and the furniture and decorations for the foyer in the Polish Theatre in Warsaw. In the

21 *Architekt*, 1902, no. 8, col. 95–96.

22 *II. sprawozdanie Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana” w Krakowie 1903...*, p. 8.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

24 *Katalog VII. wystawy Towarzystwa Artystów Polskich „Sztuka” i II. wystawy Towarzystwa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”...*, p. 26.

25 *Katalog nowożytnych tkanin i wyrobów ceramicznych...*, p. 50.

26 “Wystawa projektów meblowych” [Exhibition of furniture design], *Czas*, 1905, no. 60, pp. 1, 2.

27 *IV. Sprawozdanie Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana w Krakowie r. 1905...*, pp. 6, 7.

28 “Konkurs przemysłu artystycznego”, *Czas*, 1908, no. 285, p. 2.

years 1915, 1917 and 1918 he exhibited designs for pieces of furniture and finished projects at Zachęta in Warsaw.²⁹

Few of the above pieces and interiors have survived until the present day; most of them are known from early 20th-century photographs. One of his cupboards is now in the National Museum in Cracow³⁰ and a set of furniture dating from the inter-war period is in a private collection in Warsaw. Before the 2nd World War the set of furniture designed for Papieska's bedroom was in the collection of the National Museum in Warsaw; it is now considered to have been lost during the war. The interior of the larger dining hall in the Old Theatre restaurant in Cracow (Fig. 4),³¹ a set of dining-room furniture which used to be privately owned (Fig. 3),³² a bookshelf and a chair, also privately owned (Fig. 1),³³ and another bookshelf (Fig. 2)³⁴ are known from photographs. Reymont's studio (Fig. 8) and Papieska's bedroom (Fig. 9),³⁵ shown at the 1908 exhibition in Warsaw, and the suburban villa bedroom shown in Cracow in 1912 (Fig. 11),³⁶ are similarly known from photographs. The foyer of the Polish Theatre (Fig. 12),³⁷ the Grand Hotel café and the Skating Rink in the Luxemburg Gallery,³⁸ all of them in Warsaw, are known from press photographs, which are rarely of good quality.

Few designs for furniture have survived. Designs for a chair and a bedroom furniture set are kept in the Print Room of the Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow,³⁹ the National Museum in Warsaw has a design for a chair, and a set of designs is in a private collection in Warsaw.

Pieces of furniture designed by Trojanowski are most probably still used by the heirs of the aficionados of Polish design living in the early 20th century; the current owners may no longer remember who designed these pieces. Trojanowski received a considerable number of private commissions for sets of furniture, so he modified his designs or re-used earlier ones. Photographs of the dining room in Aleksander Rothert's house in Lvov illustrate this practice (Fig. 5)⁴⁰. To meet this private commission, Trojanowski paired chairs in the same shape as those in the Old Theatre

29 Materials from the Dictionary of Polish Artists, Institute of Art, Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw.

30 National Museum in Cracow, MNK IV-Sp-204.

31 Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts (Akademia Sztuk Pięknych, henceforward: ASP), Cracow, no. 7948, 7949.

32 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7754, 7952, 8505, 8506.

33 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 8462.

34 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 8461.

35 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 13343/15, 13343/14; *Sztuka Stosowana*. Wydawnictwo Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana [Applied Art. Published by the Polish Applied Art Association] 1908, fasc. 9.

36 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7869, 13345/12, Jagiellonian University Museum, no. 492, 495, 497, 590, 591, 615, 616, 623, 637, 908.

37 "Teatr Polski w Warszawie" [The Polish Theatre in Warsaw], *Architekt*, 1913, fasc. 3–4.

38 "Grand Hotel – Grand Café", *Świat*, 1911, no. 37, p. 24.

39 Print Room, ASP, Cracow, no. 7751, 7744, 7745, 8488, 8382, 8422.

40 Jagiellonian University Museum, no. 779, 780, 783.



Fig. 1. Edward Trojanowski, cupboard and chair, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

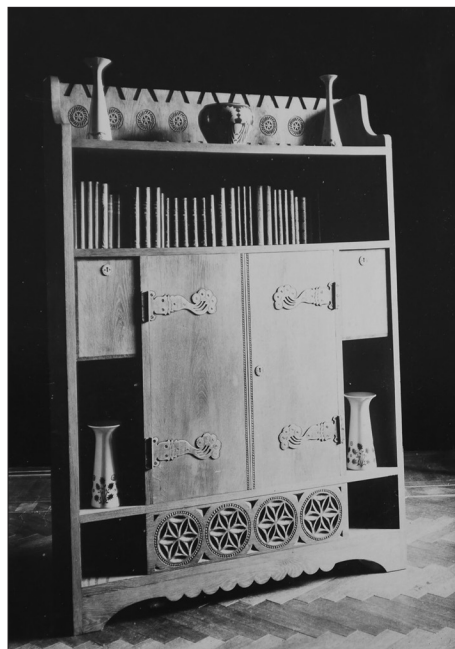


Fig. 2. Edward Trojanowski, cupboard, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow



Fig. 3. Edward Trojanowski, set of dining room furniture, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow



Fig. 4. Edward Trojanowski, interior of the larger dining hall at the Old Theatre in Cracow, photo by T. Jabłoński, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow



Fig. 5. Edward Trojanowski, dining room in Aleksander Rothert's house in Lvov, photo by A. Pawlikowski, Jagiellonian University Museum in Cracow

restaurant with a newly designed credenza and cupboard. All the pieces have simple forms decorated with folk-style detailing.

Folk art inspirations

In the course of his cooperation with the TPSS, Edward Trojanowski used his pen to write as much as to design, and advocated his views, and the principles of the TPSS, in press articles. He considered the attempts to develop a national style in Polish art to be particularly important, so that

a foreigner who wanders into Poland might discover us in our own home, living our own life, one of the strongest expressions of which is art; that he might discover us in a Polish home, a home he had not seen in France or in Germany; that he might discover a peasant who does not look like a London cabbie, sit on a different stool than he is used to sitting on at his own place, and eat from a different bowl.⁴¹

This was to be an art which originated from the spirit of the nation and which answered the nation's needs, its history and landscape. According to Trojanowski, artists could develop this art only by means of "a deep self-analysis, [...] self-discovery, [...] by creating an environment that best fits the conditions of the Polish land and our physical and spiritual needs".⁴² In addition, the national style was to become a weapon in political struggle. Trojanowski wrote that it was to be "one of our political victories, one of the strongest proofs of our vitality, one more Polish property which, if we come to love it with all our hearts, we will be able to defend with all the strength of our fists against those who might want to take it away from us".⁴³

Trojanowski ardently opposed the idea of making use of Western-European trends in art. He was very critical of the abilities which the artists wishing to learn furniture design could acquire in Vienna, Munich or Berlin, because, as he wrote, "they would bring from there a technical template for drawing Art Nouveau curlicues".⁴⁴ In his view, "Polish art [...] ought to arise and grow on its own soil".⁴⁵ He roundly criticised the Galician interior shown at the World Exposition in Paris, designed by Edgar Kováts, admonishing his compatriots that they had been "Czechs, Russians, Bulgarians, Romanians and God knows who else, but never Poles, never yourselves".⁴⁶ He petitioned artists to create original pieces, "not on the basis of patterns you have seen at Paris exhibitions or in foreign monthlies, such as *The Studio*, *Die Kunst*, *Decorative Kunst* and others"; he encouraged them to "first get acquainted with the character of the Polish land, come into harmony with it, and

41 E. Trojanowski, "Polska sztuka stosowana" [Polish Applied Art], *Nowa Reforma*, 1901, no. 249, pp. 1–2.

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 E. Trojanowski, "Sztuka i lud" [Art and the folk people], *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, 1902, no. 42, pp. 826, 827.

45 Ibid.

46 Trojanowski, *Polska sztuka stosowana*..., pp. 1–2.

only then create artworks”; only in these circumstances would their effort result in giving Poland “an individual art”.⁴⁷

Trojanowski perceived folk art to be the prime source of inspiration and to lay at the heart of the postulated uniqueness of Polish art. Following John Ruskin, he pointed out that “we shall not learn to love and understand beauty among the murky, constricting walls of cities”.⁴⁸ From its inception, the TPSS documented folk art and collected the works of folk artists, showing their examples at two exhibitions, in Cracow and in Warsaw, both held in 1902. The exhibition at Warsaw’s Zachęta met with vocal criticism. Trojanowski, who co-organised these exhibitions, explained to the public that the aim of the whole enterprise was

to collect [...] material [that] would allow us to see whether we have any motifs, and if yes, how many of them, that would only need to be pondered upon by an artistic mind in order to be accepted by today’s craftsmen, or even could be taken as they are. In this manner we wish to facilitate the work of future creators, who in the material collected by the Association would find a large number of decorative and architectural motifs.⁴⁹

This was to be a creative material for those who “would wish to detach themselves from Western art and avoid its influence; this material is to serve as a foundation for their future output”⁵⁰. The aim of the endeavour to collect and exhibit folk art was to create an atmosphere that would make it possible to revive, among others, Polish applied art (Fig. 2).

In Trojanowski’s opinion, that reason why folk art was to constitute a guideline for artists was that it expressed the uniquely Polish colour and line, preserved in the works of folk artists who detested and successfully resisted outside influence.⁵¹ In the year 1915 he wrote that in folk art

until recently everything, almost down to the last loop, bore a clear mark of its origin; it expressed the purpose of the object and an appreciation of the material and its practical application [so clear] that [it] seemed to spring from a miraculous source; and all this, although outwardly awkward and rough at times, possessed a quality of stately dignity.⁵²

At the same time, however, Trojanowski wrote that it was “not the folk motifs, but the manner in which folk art was created” that he proposed “as a model that future artists should copy”.⁵³ In his view, artists should be inspired by the approach of the folk creators, who are not limited by any norms and whose works are

47 E. Trojanowski, “Głos z obozu. O sztuce stosowanej” [A voice from the camp. On applied art], *Gazeta Polska*, 1902, no. 23, p. 1.

48 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud...*, pp. 826, 827.

49 Trojanowski, *Głos z obozu. O sztuce stosowanej...*, p. 1.

50 E. Trojanowski, “Pierwsza wystawa Towarzystwa „Polska sztuka stosowana”” [The first exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], *Czas*, 1902, no. 25, p. 1, 2.

51 Ibid.

52 E. Trojanowski, *Odrodzenie rzemiosła polskiego* [The revival of Polish crafts], Warsaw, 1915, p. 5.

53 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud...*, pp. 826, 827.

characterised by sincerity. "Let us love this art for its honesty",⁵⁴ he argued, adding that folk art was filled with true emotions; in his view, it was a hymn in praise of God, it was "lament and laughter, tragedy and joy, it was elation, vengeance, rebellion, a powerful manifestation of every impulse of the soul".⁵⁵ In folk art, he found "great artistic feeling", stronger even than in professional art.⁵⁶ Thus he arrived at the conclusion that "love and dignity, simplicity and strength should be the axiom of Polish art, [since] this axiom once used to be the guiding light of the Polish soul; and through such art can this powerful, old Polish art be revived".⁵⁷

A folk artist, as Trojanowski wrote, seeks inspiration "in what surrounds [him] and most intimately engages the heart and the sight";⁵⁸ this is what gives him freedom. Trojanowski was of the opinion that "a peasant would create art instinctively; what he wishes to do is to paint or carve a shape he has seen, and, his fingers not having enough agility, he simplifies this shape, stylises it in an astoundingly beautiful and characteristic manner, because he is continuously attempting to achieve unity with the surrounding nature".⁵⁹ According to Trojanowski, a peasant always perceived himself as a part of nature, and

his soul [was] full of adoration towards the strange miracles of nature, which he alone had observed and for which he loved this land, for which he worshipped it, for which he saw in this land an unknown God to whom he prayed by means of his art. He is the only one to know this nature; but he is unaware of his brotherly bond with it.⁶⁰

From this unity with nature, wrote Trojanowski, arose folk art, which was "similar to the world surrounding [the peasant artist]; rich, bright, earnest, sincere, great and involving".⁶¹ Closeness to nature allowed folk artists to create objects and architecture, in which "the gracefulness of form vied with practicality and the knowledge of timber".⁶² By turning to folk art, artists and designers should turn to nature.

In addition, Trojanowski noted a certain supremacy of folk art. In his view, this art was created out of the need to "make life more pleasant".⁶³ The peasants, he avowed, did not make allowances for any limitations in their art, save for "filling a part of their lives with happiness",⁶⁴ whereas professional art, in contrast, was

54 Trojanowski, *Pierwsza wystawa Towarzystwa „Polska sztuka stosowana”* ..., pp. 1, 2.

55 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud* ..., pp. 826, 827.

56 Ibid.

57 Trojanowski, *Pierwsza wystawa Towarzystwa „Polska sztuka stosowana”* ..., pp. 1, 2.

58 Ibid.

59 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud* ..., pp. 826, 827.

60 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 59, E. Trojanowski, "List z Warszawy z powodu wystawy sztuki stosowanej" [A letter from Warsaw regarding the exhibition of applied art], *Słowo Polskie*, 1902.

61 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud* ..., pp. 826, 827.

62 Trojanowski, *Odrodzenie rzemiosła polskiego* ..., p. 15.

63 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud* ..., pp. 826, 827.

64 Ibid.

“more often artifice than, as with the former, the bright side of life”.⁶⁵ If the artists surrounded themselves with folk art, however, “perhaps the cataract of deceit and artificial art would fall from our eyes”.⁶⁶ In sum, Trojanowski and the TPSS wished for art “that would be a continuation of life; our aim is to return to sincerity, to light, to colour. We desire creative freedom”, Trojanowski wrote; “we desire art that would be intelligible to the Polish soul and worthy of our heartfelt love”.⁶⁷

Trojanowski repeatedly stressed that folk motifs must not be passively copied, thus robbing the folk artists of their heritage. He attempted to enlighten the public that “at the very start of its work, [TPSS] descended to the lowly peasant hut in order to seek knowledge. To learn, not to rob its residents of their harvest. To investigate the peculiar way in which folk creativity arises, and the essential need for art”.⁶⁸ Elsewhere, he wrote: “Yet we did not approach this magical peasant coffer in order to draw fistfuls of its filling and melt it in a crucible into an intelligent, or noble, artsy art. [...] We respected folk art’s simplicity and sincerity too much for that”.⁶⁹ He advised artists to

learn from [peasants] how to create, how to observe nature in this simple, unpolished, yet strangely beautiful manner; let us seek models in our nearest environment, like they do; but let us not steal their creative work from them. By joining the details we have observed into one whole, we do not create any original thing, at least not until we are able to produce a separate shape; and we proceed in this way because we are entirely unable to comprehend the spirit of this thoroughly native art.⁷⁰

Even though folk art was supposed to create an atmosphere in which Polish art would be revived and be a guiding light for artistic exploration, Trojanowski did not wish to force it upon “people who by themselves, without the aid of these collections, are able to create their own works that would appeal to the Polish soul just as well as these do”.⁷¹ He assured his readers that “artistic Poland is not the lily motifs from Zakopane, not the woollens from Łowicz and the Cracow belts. If we were to stop at what folk art brought us, we would forever keep turning in this small enchanted ring”.⁷²

Trojanowski’s furniture designs from his Cracow period evince clear folk-art inspirations. Those inspirations were acquired in more than one way; the designer drew them from folk ornamentation as much as from the forms of particular elements of folk furniture, and even from their colour schemes. He often made use of

65 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 59, E. Trojanowski, “List z Warszawy z powodu wystawy sztuki stosowanej”, *Słowo Polskie*, 1902.

66 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud...*, pp. 826, 827.

67 Ibid.

68 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 59, E. Trojanowski, “List z Warszawy z powodu wystawy sztuki stosowanej”, *Słowo Polskie*, 1902.

69 Ibid.

70 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud...*, pp. 826, 827.

71 Trojanowski, *Głos z obozu. O sztuce stosowanej...*, p. 1.

72 Trojanowski, *Pierwsza wystawa Towarzystwa „Polska sztuka stosowana”...*, pp. 1, 2.

a detail found in folk chests: a wavy apron-like element mounted under the box. Similar details are found in the cupboard now in the National Museum in Cracow, the chair and credenza from the set of dining-room furniture,⁷³ in the chairs from the Old Theatre restaurant,⁷⁴ and in the washstand, bed and wardrobe from the design for a set of bedroom furniture.⁷⁵ Also, folk carvings inspired the pediment and bottom-edge decorations of various pieces of furniture, which are shaped into rounded serrations or alternating trapezoidal teeth. Such elements are found in the bookshelves from Reymont's study,⁷⁶ in another bookshelf, made of oak wood,⁷⁷ and in the bed and wardrobe from the design for a set of bedroom furniture.⁷⁸ In his designs for credenzas, Trojanowski divided the upper cupboard's front with small-scale arcading, a solution evident in a piece from the dining room set designed for a private client⁷⁹ and the Old Theatre credenza.⁸⁰ It is possible that this form was inspired by the arcaded façades of traditional Polish timber-frame houses. The existence of similar echoes was detected in Ludwik Puszet's design for a credenza.⁸¹

Trojanowski's pieces of furniture had simple, solid forms enhanced with decorative elements based on folk art. He made use of a vast collection of folk cut-outs from various regions of Poland, which was owned by TPSS (and is currently to be found in the Ethnographic Museum in Cracow). One motif derived from the cut-outs is the lily, used as metal mounts of a bookshelf.⁸² Volutes based on cut-outs decorate the back of the chair, the doors of the washstand and the headboard of the bed designed by Trojanowski.⁸³ Łowicz cut-outs provided a starting point for the decoration of the doors to the cupboard in the National Museum in Cracow. Among the ornaments Trojanowski applied most often, and in various materials, was the motif of highly stylised symmetrical twigs, which may have been derived from the painted decorations of folk chests. He used it in the credenzas in the designs for the dining room set and the Old Theatre set, in the oak bookshelf, and in the bookshelf he designed for Reymont. Such boughs were the dominant decorative motif of the backs of the chairs designed for the Old Theatre and they are also found in the design for a chair now in the Print Room of the Academy of the Fine Arts.⁸⁴ Various star motifs were also liberally applied; they are seen in the dining room set and in three bookshelves. The structure of the pieces of furniture was softened with wavy

73 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 8506, 7952, 8505.

74 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 7949.

75 Design, ASP Print Room, no. 8488, 8382, 8422.

76 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 13343/15.

77 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 7952.

78 Design, ASP Print Room, no. 8382, 8422.

79 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 8506, 7952, 8505.

80 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 7949.

81 "Pierwsza Wystawa Tow. „Polska sztuka stosowana”" [The first exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association], *Czas*, 1903, no. 287, pp. 1–2.

82 Photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 8462.

83 Design, ASP Print Room, no. 7744, 8488, 8382.

84 Design, ASP Print Room, no. 7751.

lines, visible, for example, in the crest rails of the dining-set chairs, as well as in the chair backs and the buffet designed for the Old Theatre restaurant room. Other motifs found in Trojanowski's furniture designs include lilies, zigzags⁸⁵ and hearts.⁸⁶

Trojanowski was very audacious in his use of vibrant colour in order to either enhance the ornamentation of a piece of furniture, or to cover its entire surface; he selected upholstery fabrics and designed wall polychromes in deep tones. It may be assumed that in this he was also inspired by folk art. One of the surviving pieces of furniture that he designed and in which deep colours are used is the cupboard now in the National Museum in Cracow; its decorative motifs, inspired by folk cut-outs and folk ornamentation, are enhanced with red, blue and navy blue. Early 20th-century press materials contain reports on some other designs by Trojanowski which had polychrome surfaces. Designs he sent for the contest for furniture in a "native style", which was held by the Zachęta gallery in Warsaw in 1902, caught the attention of both the jury and art critics. *Kurier Warszawski* wrote that Trojanowski's design was the most original one of all, as "it altogether abandoned the unfortunate Zakopane style; [Trojanowski] avoided all the Baroque, Renaissance, Gothic and suchlike, began his work from point zero and achieved results that had never been conceived before. He was inspired by folk art, from which he derived ideas for his pieces of furniture, for mounts, colours and so on". The colour scheme of his furniture was complimented further on: "Trojanowski's colours are strong, energetic, but well-matched: red, green, burgundy, applied on pieces whose shapes are simple, unsophisticated yet original, especially the credenza, desk and clock".⁸⁷ At the TPSS exhibition, held in the Palace of Art in Cracow in 1903, Trojanowski presented a cupboard and a chair with a simple construction but very surprising scheme of intense and contrasting colours: the chair's upholstery was yellow, and the wooden frame violet.⁸⁸ Intense colours were used also in the 1906 design for the Old Theatre restaurant room. The wainscoting in the lower section of the walls, which went round the entire space and which was an earlier element that Trojanowski had to integrate into his design, was painted green and blue. Polychrome decoration based on stylised motifs of chime circles attached to Cracow belts match the wainscoting. Painted decorations were blue and gold against the background of white walls. Oakwood furniture was enhanced with mahogany elements (the credenza and the buffet). The colour of mahogany was matched by the dark-red fabric on the upholstery of chairs and settees; it was also used in the decoration of the buffet.⁸⁹

In his designs for interiors and furniture, Trojanowski did not follow the method of imitating folk pieces. His creative approach to folk motifs is evident when

85 Credenza, photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 8506.

86 Chair, photograph, ASP Print Room, no. 8462.

87 "Styl swojski na dwóch konkursach" [The native style at two contests], *Kurier Warszawski*, 1902, no. 199, pp. 1, 3.

88 *Pierwsza Wystawa Tow. „Polska sztuka stosowana”...*, pp. 1–2.

89 "Restauracja w Starym Teatrze w Krakowie" [The restaurant in the Old Theatre in Cracow], *Architekt*, 1907, no. 4, col. 79–82; "Ze sztuk plastycznych" [From fine arts], *Czas*, 1906, no. 7, s. 3; "Stary Teatr" [The Old Theatre], *Czas*, 1906, no. 217, pp. 1–2.

his works are compared to those by Włodzimierz Tetmajer. At the TPSS exhibition in Cracow in 1902, Tetmajer displayed “an idea for a bedroom interior furnished in the Cracow style” (with Antoni Procajłowicz as its co-author). This design was later expanded and at the exhibition in Warsaw in the same year consisted of the bedroom plus four drawings of a “chamber furnished in the Cracow style”. One of those drawings is now in the Ethnographic Museum in Cracow. The Historical Museum of the City of Cracow has an unfinished design for the chamber and a sketch of the bedroom. In his designs for interiors, Tetmajer arranged wooden settles, chests and a bed along the whitewashed walls on which he placed decorations and small pictures; the walls are crowned with a row of framed sacred images. Contemporary critics accused him of stagnating by only compiling motifs derived from folk art.⁹⁰

Trojanowski wrote that “the Polish character of a piece of furniture does not rely on affixing or carving a lily, or painting a heart”; it should lie “in the very architecture of the piece”.⁹¹ He would himself use motifs derived from folk art, but he would usually stylise them; he did not “affix” folk lilies, but tried to apply forms based on their shape in, for instance, designing metal furniture mounts. Under the influence of folk furniture design, his pieces acquired simple cubic forms enhanced with ornaments and wavy lines of wooden frames which unobtrusively suggested the “native” nature of the piece. Trojanowski’s style heralded the furniture by the Cracow Workshop team of designers: Karol Stryjeński, Wojciech Jastrzębowski, Karol Homolacs and Franciszek Mączyński. As Irena Huml observed, their pieces “were typified by [...] solid forms not devoid of ornamentation, often a geometric one [...] with village woodcarving as a clear inspiration [...] and a prevalence of hard lines, roughly hewn shapes, ornaments seemingly carved with a primitive tool” (Fig. 7).⁹²

Folk reminiscences are also clear in Trojanowski’s output dating from the inter-war period. The items he presented at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925 refer to folk art. These solid, simply shaped pieces of furniture are decorated with motifs derived, but not directly quoted, from this art. A bookcase for a private library (Fig. 6), as well as a small table and a settle exhibited in the *kilim* room, are decorated with stars, rosettes, serrations and pronounced joints. A subtle inspiration from folk furniture design is evident in the set produced in ca. 1925 for Mr. Tadeusz Antoniewicz and his wife Czesława née Strzelecka from Warsaw (Fig. 7).⁹³ The set designed for Mr and

90 M. Limanowski, “O Zakopane na I. Wystawie Tow. Polskiej Sztuki Stos. w Krakowie” [About Zakopane at the 1st exhibition of the Polish Applied Art Association in Cracow], *Przegląd Zakopiański*, 1902, no. 10, pp. 95–100.

91 Trojanowski, *Sztuka i lud...*, pp. 826, 827.

92 I. Huml, *Polska sztuka stosowana XX wieku* [Polish applied art of the 20th century], Warsaw, 1978, p. 61.

93 I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Antoniewicz family for granting me access to the designs and giving me an opportunity to see the pieces of furniture designed by Trojanowski.

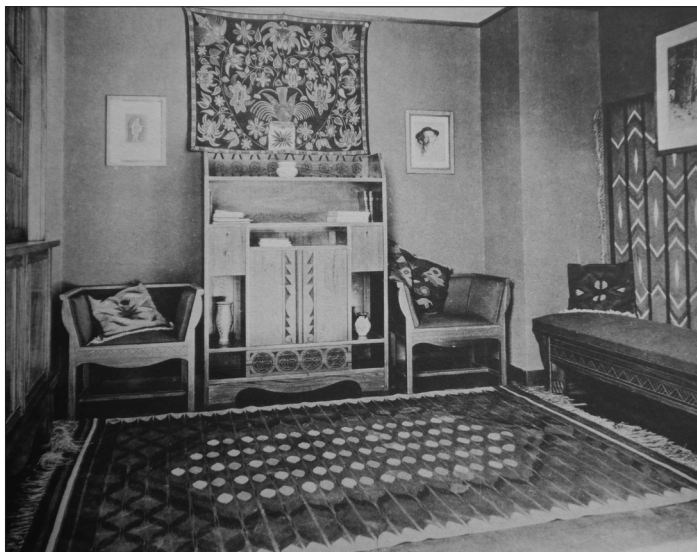


Fig. 6. Edward Trojanowski, library room at the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts in Paris in 1925, reproduced in J. Warchałowski, *Polska sztuka dekoracyjna*, Warsaw, Cracow, 1928



Fig. 7. Edward Trojanowski, credenza from the set designed for Czesława and Tadeusz Antoniewicz from Warsaw, photo by A. Wójcik, private collection

Mrs Antoniewicz was intended mainly for the dining room, but its elements could also be used to furnish the sitting room, the study or children's room.⁹⁴ The heirs of Mr and Mrs Antoniewicz own designs not only for the pieces that were made (i.e. the table, armchair, credenza, small bench, bookshelf, samovar table and children's-room chair), but also for the pieces that were not made (i.e. the chess table, chair and grandfather clock). The items were made of ash wood and, with the exception of table tops and the credenza door, are not veneered. All of them have concise forms and are constructed according to the principles of symmetry and balanced proportion, with dominant arrangements of squares and rectangles; they exude an aura of solidity and stability. Their most striking feature is the noble quality of the material of which they were made; some of these pieces (i.e. the small round tables, the bookshelf) are entirely undecorated. In addition, Trojanowski made use of the decorative effect created by wood grain: the veneer on the dining-room table was laid in a chessboard pattern, in a circle on the round-topped tables, and in an envelope pattern on the credenza door. In this, he attempted to replace ornament with the decorative quality of the material itself, as also indicated by the side walls and doors of items of furniture constructed of splats set in a chevron pattern. Decorative elements make a subtle reference to folk decoration. Wavy lines and heart-shaped apertures decorate the backs of the so-called school chairs. Similar wavy lines are found on the backs of the chairs, the bench and the desk armchair; the first two are additionally decorated with simplified rosettes. The front splat of the chairs and the bench is also finished in a wavy line, as is the bottom splat of the credenza box, which is additionally decorated with volutes referring to folk chests. The volute is, in fact, used relatively extensively in this set, appearing also as a finial of the armrests of the armchair and the bench. Vertical splats of the credenza, with a line of beading through the centre and with edges decorated with a wavy line and volutes, also recall folk woodcarving.

The neo-Biedermeier style

The chairman of the TPSS, Jerzy Warchałowski, affectionately described country mansion interiors as hospitable, comfortable, spacious, full of "friendly spirits: they peek out of each corner, dwell in every piece of furniture, hover in the air... The doors are open all the way, from the front to the back". In his view, those interiors invited a weary guest to rest awhile, and bestowed serenity on a "troubled soul".⁹⁵ In the early 20th century, the architectural form of a country mansion of the landed gentry became a handy formula for suburban and countryside residences. This is confirmed by the results of several contests: for the mansion in Opinogóra (1908),

94 The set comprises an extending table, twelve chairs, a credenza, three cupboards (used also as bookcases), two different small tables with round tops, a settle, a samovar table, an armchair for the desk in the study, a closet/bookcase, three chairs designed for the children's room.

95 J. Warchałowski, "Dawniej i dzisiaj" [In the past and today], *Przegląd Techniczny*, 1911, no. 34, s. 436.

the mansion designed for an exhibition in Rome (1911), types of suburban villas (1912), the mansion in Niegowić (1913); in all of them, the awards went to designs in the traditional landed gentry mansion style. TPSS, to which Trojanowski was attached, played a part in making this architecture popular: it organised the contest for the Opinogóra mansion and published photographs and drawings of country mansions in its periodical *Materiały Towarzystwa Polska Sztuka Stosowana*. It also organised the exhibitions of timber architecture (Cracow, 1905) and architecture and interior design (Cracow, 1912).

Living spaces characteristic of country mansions inspired furniture designers and interior designers as well. Research on the furnishings of Polish country mansions has shown that they were mainly in the Biedermeier style.⁹⁶ As observed by Joanna Woch, “having taken root in country mansions of the gentry and the town homes of the intelligentsia, the Biedermeier style survived there to the end of the 19th century; new pieces of furniture were no more than an addition”.⁹⁷ In the late 19th and the early 20th century the features of Biedermeier-style furniture – comfort, functionality, balanced proportions, restraint in the use of ornamentation, and focus on the natural decorative quality of wood – came to fascinate Austrian and German designers. Polish designers also appreciated these inspirations; not as a foreign fashion, however, but as a next step in the search for a national style. To Trojanowski, mansions of the gentry constituted “fertile soil for Polish creative output that fully reflected the customs, and the jovial and affable character, of a Pole”. In his view, it is from those mansions that culture and art seeped down to the peasant houses.⁹⁸ Trojanowski explained that every artist and designer considers tradition to be an important path of creative exploration; he also stressed the importance of the turn towards applied art dating from the first half of the 19th century. “The greatest and the most distinctive artists of all periods of time did not, and do not, disdain tradition”, he wrote. “We see the English, the Germans, and finally, of late, Polish artists as well, beginning to return – especially in furniture design – to pieces dating from before 1840, that is, to the period in which the achievements of earlier art were splendidly put to use”.⁹⁹ To substantiate his theory regarding the creative role of drawing from native tradition, he cited Hermann Muthesius, asserting that “no human thought has ever been born in isolation, outside the ground tilled by the earlier spiritual toil of the humankind. Even the most audacious innovator unthinkingly takes the outcome of earlier work as his foundation. Tradition is but a process

96 E. Kowecka, “Wybrane zagadnienia organizacji życia materialnego na dworach polskich w XIX wieku” [Selected issues in the organisation of material life in Polish mansions in the 19th century], in: *Dwór polski w XIX wieku. Zjawisko historyczne i kulturowe* [The Polish mansion in the 19th century. A historical and cultural phenomenon], ed. J. Baranowski, Warsaw, 1992, p. 74.

97 J. Woch, *Biedermeier. Przewodnik dla kolekcjonerów* [Biedermeier. Collectors’ guide], Warsaw, 2007, p. 12.

98 Trojanowski, *Odrodzenie rzemiosła polskiego...*, p. 13.

99 Ibid., p. 12, citing H. Muthesius, *Sztuka stosowana i architektura* [Applied art and architecture], Cracow, 1909 (original title *Die angewandte Kunst und Architektur*).

of development".¹⁰⁰ Art critics appreciated this as a path of development laid out for Polish design. The TPSS exhibition in 1908 prompted Eligiusz Niewiadomski to write that the presented pieces of furniture and interiors (including two designed by Trojanowski) "attested to one thing: a desire to discard the revoltingly stereotypical character of today's furniture; and, more importantly, to discard it not with the help of Secession styles from Vienna or Munich, but... there was something else there... something [derived] from themselves, and also from tradition... From those pleasant times when our grandmothers, then young and lovely, sat at the spinet to sing the unforgettable song about Philo to handsome uhlans..."¹⁰¹

Trojanowski did not try to replicate Biedermeier furniture; what he attempted to do was to refer to tradition and make use of its achievements. His pieces reveal many features distinctive to furniture design of the Biedermeier period. Most pieces of his design, especially cupboards, credenzas and wardrobes, have a cohesive, balanced, geometric form. He contrasted natural hues of wood, with a light-coloured body of the piece and dark detailing, several times (e.g. the credenza from the dining room set, the set of furniture for a bedroom in a suburban villa exhibited in 1912, the design for bedroom furniture, the set for Reymont's study, the credenza and buffet for the Old Theatre restaurant room).

Designing the chairs for the Old Theatre, Trojanowski used the Greek Revival form of a Biedermeier-style chair, in the versions with and without armrests; but he enhanced it with a decoration inspired by folk art. He also used detailing based on Biedermeier style, e.g. pilasters (the Old Theatre credenza and buffet, credenza from the dining room set, wardrobe from Papieska's bedroom set) and square muntins to divide glass surfaces (e.g. the cupboard from the set for Reymont's study, the credenza from the dining room set, the Old Theatre credenza). Also the motif of the volute most probably derives from Biedermeier furniture design. This was practically Trojanowski's signature; he used the volute in both three- and two-dimensional forms (e.g. in the sets for Papieska's bedroom, Reymont's study, and a bedroom).

It may be assumed that Biedermeier furniture design influenced Trojanowski's output from ca. 1912 as well. Pieces of furniture from the first half of the 19th century were often without any ornamentation; they were not even decorated with complicated intarsia. The decorative effect was achieved mostly by the clearly visible wood grain. In designing a set of furniture for a bedroom in a suburban villa for the Cracow exhibition in 1912 and furniture for the foyer in the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, Trojanowski produced pieces with simple forms and no decorations; instead, they are covered with top-quality veneer waxed or shellacked to high gloss.

By drawing on the achievements of furniture design dating from the first half of the 19th century, Trojanowski found himself connected with the circle of artist-designers attached to the TPSS, who also attempted to produce modern furniture, but made use of the tradition of interior design associated with country mansions.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp. 12–13.

¹⁰¹ E. Niewiadomski, "O polskiej sztuce stosowanej i jej przyjęciu w Warszawie" [On Polish applied art and its reception in Warsaw], *Witcz*, 1908, fasc. 7, p. 364.

His designs may be compared to furniture for suburban villas shown at the Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors in a Garden Environment, e.g. the dining room by Henryk Uziembło, the study by Józef Czajkowski, the sitting room by Karol Tichy, and the sets for Władysław Reymont's dining room and the Old Theatre buffet room, also by Czajkowski.

The Modernist-geometric trend

His studies on folk art and the influence of the Biedermeier caused Trojanowski to design pieces of furniture with simplified forms, achieved by a combination of a few solids, and decorated with a similarly geometric ornament. This trend is visible in his furniture-designing output dating from ca. 1908. In that year, at the TPSS exhibition at Zachęta, he presented two sets of furniture he had designed on private commission; those were Władysław Reymont's study and Maria Papińska's bedroom, (both made at Drążkiewicz's workshop in Warsaw). The set of furniture designed for the writer still manifests some traces of folk art, evident in the ornamentation of the bookcases and the table. The armchairs and the sofa, however, are dominated by purely geometric forms. Two types of armchairs, one with a high, the other with a low backrest, have cohesive, cubic shapes based on squares, rectangles and circles. The structure of the seats is guided by straight angles. Also the ornamentation has nothing to do with folk star patterns or serrations. Trojanowski made use of the potential offered by a contrast of two kinds of wood (most probably oak and mahogany)¹⁰² by applying geometric details made of dark wood on structural elements made of light-coloured wood. The cubic quality of the pieces is softened by oversized volutes which make the finials of the armrests and the of the wings. Designing the set for Reymont's study, Trojanowski experimented with geometric forms; the sofa and the armchairs are among the most innovatively designed pieces in his entire output (Fig. 8).

For Papińska, Trojanowski designed an extensive set of bedroom furniture.¹⁰³ These pieces, similarly to the ones designed for Reymont, have a cohesive, monumental form enhanced with a well-balanced geometric ornament. Again, traces of folk craft are still evident in some elements of those pieces, for instance the wavy apron-like splats under the boxes of the bed and the wardrobe. Some echoes of the Biedermeier style are also discernible; columns on the wardrobe or round glass panes in the wardrobe and the dressing table are a case in point. There are very few soft,

102 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20028, fol. 12, 13, *Wystawa „polskiej sztuki stosowanej” 5 III 1908* [Exhibition of “Polish applied art” 5 March 1908].

103 That set included not only a bed, a night table, a wardrobe, a screen, a toilet table with a mirror and a chair, but also a set of furniture for a boudoir-sitting room: a table, a sofa, small armchairs, a large armchair, a desk and corner bookshelves. This information comes from the inventory book of the National Museum in Warsaw, where these pieces were held until the 2nd World War (inv. no. 74361–74375).



Fig. 8. Edward Trojanowski, set of study furniture designed for Władysław Reymont, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

fluid or delicate lines in those pieces; the dominating shapes are heavy, stately, in places enhanced by well-balanced arches. The armchairs are a case in point here; the seats are massive, upholstered with leather on the inside, and the only arched elements are the supports of the armrests and the curved backrests. All the pieces are unified by their ornamentation; the principal motif was the volute, used in both three- and two-dimensional forms. This motif is seen on the secretary, the mirror, the wardrobe, the armchairs, the bed and the table. In addition, Trojanowski made use of the motif of a wavy ribbon, applied in the upper part of the bed's headboard and over the mirror. The volutes are contrasted with the intarsia decoration (made by Natalia Boberówna) on the flap of the secretary, the bed's headboard and the wings of the wardrobe. Here, the ornament designed by Trojanowski is simple and geometric: a row of rectangles creating a double line, with quarter-circles made of different wood placed in the breaks, their right angles directed towards the outside; seen from afar, it may bring to mind a ribbon with little bows. The heaviness of the pieces is accentuated by chequered cuts in the lower sections of the supports (the table, the armchairs, the secretary, the bed). As in the set for the study, Trojanowski attempted to make the pieces more attractive by contrasting two kinds of wood: the sycamore and the oak. The set was in "the yellow-brown and dark grey colour combination".¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20028, for 12, 13, *Wystawa „polskiej sztuki stosowanej”* 5 III 1908.



Fig. 9. Edward Trojanowski, set of bedroom furniture designed for Maria Papieska from Warsaw, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

Two sets of furniture exhibited by Trojanowski at Zachęta were much commented upon in the press. According to Adolf Nowaczyński, the set designed for Reymont's study was monumental, stately, "with decisive lines, quiet, mild in colouring" yet appropriate for an intellectual and a man of letters.¹⁰⁵ *Kilim* wall-hangings made by Sikorska's workshop in Czernichów (not visible in the photograph) added warmth to the interior; this is probably the reason behind the comment that it was "nice and cosy" (Fig. 9).¹⁰⁶

Nowaczyński considered the interior of Papieska's bedroom to be designed in "a serious, burgher-like, almost medieval manner".¹⁰⁷ The ornamentation aroused much interest. Reactions to the decorative volutes were mixed. *Słowo* wrote that "each of these pieces of furniture is supported by black oak columns to the sides, ending with a shell ornament; this gives them a certain very pleasing softness".¹⁰⁸ Not everyone was equally appreciative, however; Jaroszyński wrote that "the sides are made up of thick walls of black wood, with blunt and dough-like roll edges,

105 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 190, A. Nowaczyński, "Sztuka stosowana w Warszawie" [Applied art in Warsaw], *Prawda*, 8 Feb. 1908.

106 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 189, 190, "Sztuka Polska Stosowana" [Polish applied art], *Słowo*, 6 Feb. 1908.

107 Cracow, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Jerzy Warchałowski Files, signature 20029, fol. 190, A. Nowaczyński, "Sztuka stosowana w Warszawie", *Prawda*, 8 Feb. 1908.

108 "Sztuka Polska Stosowana", *Słowo*, 1908, no. 36, p. 2.

ending in chunky scrolls. These scrolls extend by half the roll above the surface of the wardrobe; and this half-a-roll is attached to the side wall as if it were meant to constitute a homogeneous whole with it. This gives a wrong and displeasing feeling, because not only is a fissure visible at the lower attachment, but also the wood grain runs differently in the roll and in the wall". Jaroszyński, citing Semper, asserted that this decoration was not appropriate for furniture and not consistent with the material of which it had been made.¹⁰⁹ The intarsia decoration was received favourably, with the comment that "colour combinations are exceptionally pleasing: sycamore wood set with matte oak that resembled leather. Built in this manner, the wardrobe, the smaller cupboard and the mirror are unusually beautiful and stately".¹¹⁰

In order to encapsulate the style of the pieces exhibited by Trojanowski at Zachęta, special attention was drawn to the simplicity of their lines and the monumental quality of their forms, which some reviewers perceived as inappropriate for men and women living at the beginning of the 20th century. Antoni Gawiński wrote that

the form [of these pieces] betrays a liking for serious, austere, rather heavy lines. The chairs, both in the study and in the bedroom, have too much of some druidic or Romanesque asceticism in them to fit the present day; they are contrived seats rather than pieces of furniture for people who are alive, sensitive and fond of comfort. [...] The entire bedroom seems to me overly austere and ascetic, almost monastic. The table, heavy but beautiful in its form, concludes the general impression.¹¹¹

Trojanowski's pieces were compared with the furniture Wyspiański had designed for Mr and Mrs Żeleński's dining room and sitting room, which were also shown at Zachęta. Kazimierz Broniewski wrote that the "practical purpose had been entirely replaced by some desire to arouse a mystic mood through the weightiness and size of the pieces of furniture [which] are put there once and forever, locked in place, as if they were some machines that ought not to be moved, so that a person should adjust himself to them, not they to him. The first impression they arouse is that of a mass, a solid, which leaves the memory empty of any play of lines or play of decorative motifs".¹¹²

Trojanowski designed the set of bedroom furniture dated to the year 1910 in a similar style as the above study and bedroom (Fig. 10).¹¹³ The design for the chair is a good example of his desire to simplify the form and to reduce the decoration and even the elements of a piece of furniture. It consists of a mere five elements. Its legs, which double as the supports of the backrest, were made of three planks; the shape of the seat is close to a semicircle, and the backrest consists of a curved splat that

109 T. Jaroszyński, "Sztuka stosowana" [Applied art], *Kurier Warszawski*, 1908, no. 47, pp. 3, 4

110 A. Gawiński, "Polska Sztuka Stosowana" [Polish applied art], *Nowa Gazeta*, 1908, no. 75, pp. 2, 3.

111 Ibid.

112 K. Broniewski, "Wystawa T-wa „Polska Sztuka Stosowana”" [Exhibition of the the Polish Applied Art Association], *Goniec Wieczorny*, 1908, no. 85, pp. 2, 3.

113 Designs for the chair, night table, chair with armrests, washstand, bed and wardrobe, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts Library, Cracow, no. 7744, 7745, 8488, 8982, 8422.

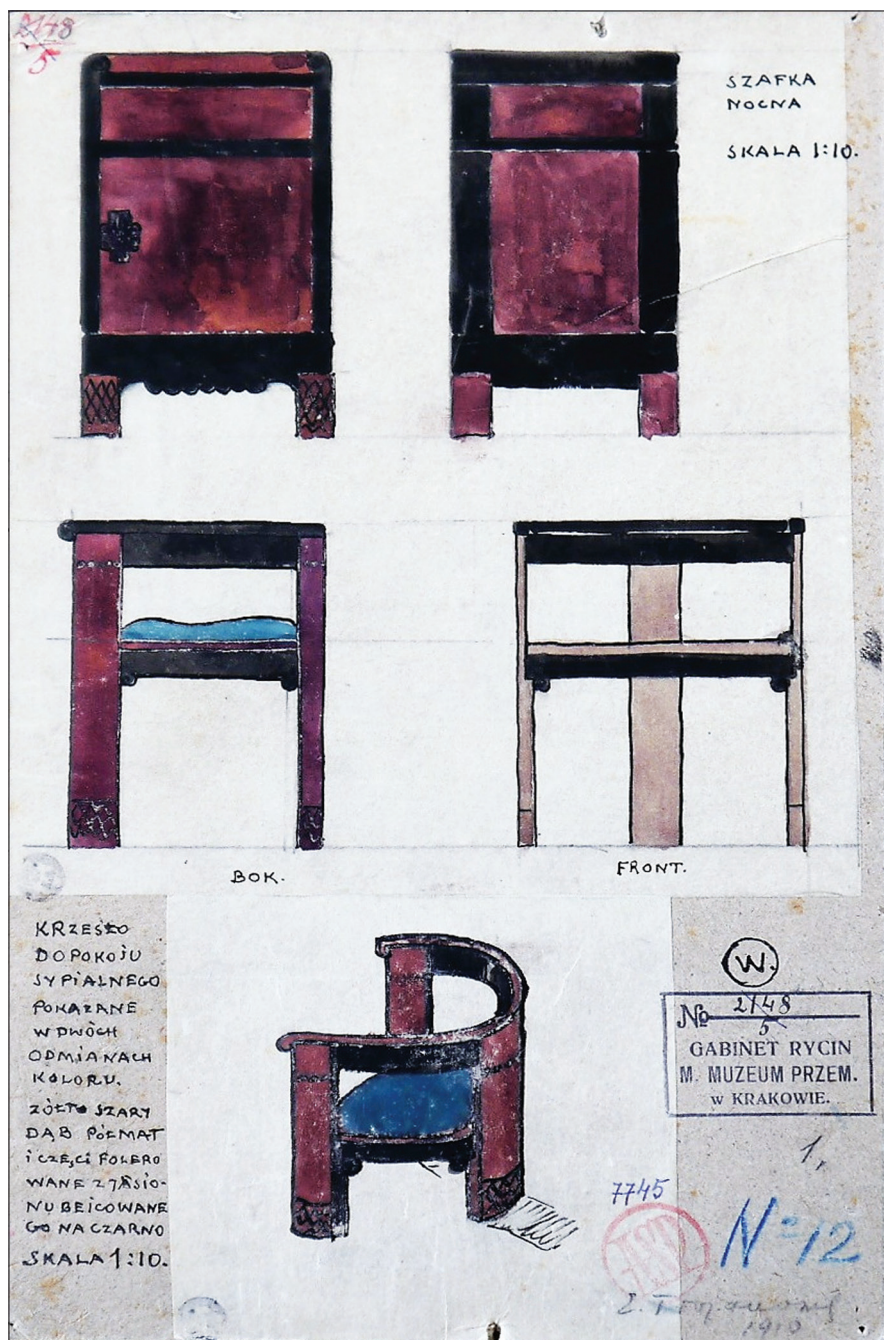


Fig. 10. Edward Trojanowski, design for a night table and armchair from the set of bedroom furniture, photo by A. Wójcik, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

joins the three supporting planks. The descriptions on the designs indicate that the colour of the upholstery was to highlight the architectural quality of the piece, and that the vertical elements were to be made of yellow-grey semi-matte oak wood and the horizontal ones from sycamore stained black. The minimalist form of the chair was enhanced only with two types of geometric ornaments: chequered cuts in the lower sections of the supports and small volutes in the front part of the backrest and under the frame of the seat, by the supports. What the pieces from the bedroom set have in common is simple form, two colours of wood used in the decoration, and geometric decorative motifs: volutes and chequered cuts (Fig. 11).



Fig. 11. Edward Trojanowski, a set of bedroom furniture for a suburban villa, exhibited at the Exhibition of Architecture and Interiors in a Garden Environment in Cracow in 1912, photo by A. Pawlikowski, Print Room, Academy of Fine Arts in Cracow

The last phase of evolution of Trojanowski's style in furniture design is exemplified by two sets known only from photographs: one for a bedroom in a suburban villa presented at the Cracow exhibition in 1912, the other in the foyer of the Polish Theatre in Warsaw (1913). They have a typically simplified form constructed from arrangements of squares and rectangles. Their central feature are proportions, which are singularly well-balanced and evoke a sense of stability. There are almost no ornaments; those which do appear are so subtle that they are easy to overlook. In the case of the bedroom, those are the volutes that constitute the endings of the head- and foot-boards of the day-bed, the bosses and balusters in the boards

of the beds, and small volutes under the table top; in the lower part of the chairs' backrests we see a strongly reworked motif of a lily familiar from folk cut-outs. The most powerful effect, however, is wrought by the material itself: the wood grain in the veneer polished to high gloss. In addition, Trojanowski made use of the contrast between a few types and colours of veneers in order to highlight the piece's structure and point to its decorative effect. In the bedroom furniture, the lightest, grain-less wood was used to accentuate the leg bottoms; the darkest veneer draws attention to the frames and edges of tops, and the remaining surfaces are covered in light-coloured veneer with a rich pattern of the grain. The wavy lines of wood grain are additionally highlighted by the outward-curving central wings of the wardrobe and the chest of drawers.

Writing in *Kurier Warszawski*, Jaroszyński commented on Trojanowski's pieces exhibited in 1908 in Warsaw, pronouncing them close to the Western-European designs in the Secession style. He compared the set designed for Reymont's study with German and English pieces in the "heavy, rigid and not very appealing" type, which could be seen in, for instance, *Moderne Bauformen*.¹¹⁴ Trojanowski, much piqued by this review, wrote a letter to the editor, asking Jaroszyński to send him the issues of the periodical containing examples of furniture designed in a similar way to his. Jaroszyński responded that he did not accuse the designer of copying Western-European patterns, only that in his works he had discerned similar qualities: a certain rigidity and two-dimensionality.¹¹⁵ Jaroszyński appears to have been right, because comparison can be made that only highlight the innovative character of Trojanowski's designs (Fig. 12).

Items of furniture with a simplified form and making use of only the geometric ornamentation and the decorative qualities of wood grain can be associated with the circle of artists linked with the Wiener Werkstätte in the first period of its activity and with the Werkbund. They can be compared to the works of Josef Hoffmann, Koloman Moser or Otto Prutscher. The Viennese designers, similarly to Trojanowski, made their pieces of furniture solid and geometric, their form based on arrangements of squares and rectangles. Armchairs which Trojanowski designed for Reymont can be compared with those found in the collection of the Museum für angewandte Kunst in Vienna (MAK) – those designed by Hoffmann for a set commissioned by Hermann Wittgenstein (1905) and those from a set designed by Moser for a study, commissioned by the Waerndorfer family (1903). Arrangements of rectangles and circles used by Trojanowski as a decorative motif, for instance in the set designed for Reymont's study, can be compared to Hoffmann's abstract, geometric arrangements of squares in the decoration of the armchairs and sofas for the hall of Dr Friedrich Victor Spitzer's villa (1900–1903)¹¹⁶ and in the sitting room set published in *Das Interieur*.¹¹⁷ Also Trojanowski's penchant for achieving

114 T. Jaroszyński, "Sztuka stosowana", *Kurier Warszawski*, 1908, no. 47, pp. 3–4.

115 Listy do redakcji [Letters to the editor], *Kurier Warszawski*, 1908, no. 54, p. 15.

116 *Art et Décoration*, 1904, no. 16, pp. 64, 67.

117 *Das Interieur*, 1904, no. 6, p. 12.



Fig. 12. Edward Trojanowski, foyer of the Polish Theatre in Warsaw, reproduced in *Architekt*, 1913, fasc. 3–4

additional decorative quality by highlighting the item's structure with various types of wood can be associated with the circle of the Wiener Werkstätte designers. Similar solutions were chosen by, for instance, Hoffmann in the set for Baroness Mautner Markhof's bedroom (1902)¹¹⁸ or Moser in the small table from the set designed for Eisler von Terramare (1903), now in the MAK collection. Trojanowski attempted to accentuate the decorative qualities of a wood or veneer in the best manner possible, adding an additional emphasis with high-gloss, while at the same time he was able to dispose of ornamentation. Viennese furniture designers applied similar solutions, as evinced by, for instance, the bedroom furniture set by Otto Prutscher, published in *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, in which the designer highlighted the attractive grain of ash wood and paired it with ebony.¹¹⁹

Furniture designed by Trojanowski was also reminiscent of some works by German designers associated with the Werkbund; those by Paul Troost and Adelbert

¹¹⁸ *Innen-Dekoration*, 1905, no. 16, pp. 180, 182.

¹¹⁹ *Kunst und Kunsthandwerk*, 1905, no. 8, pp. 547.

Niemeyer are especially pertinent. German designers, similarly to Trojanowski, ingeniously referred to furniture dating from the first half of the 19th century; their pieces are characterized by a solid form and stability. They also had the ability to make use of the decorative qualities of veneers, as exemplified by the set of bedroom furniture by Niemeyer, in which two kinds of veneer were put together to form a very successful chequered pattern.¹²⁰ A few designs for furniture sets by Troost feature simple but attractive high-gloss veneers and sparse, geometrical, rhythmically repeated ornaments (circles, squares and ovals),¹²¹ in which they are reminiscent of Trojanowski's 1912 set of bedroom furniture for a suburban villa or the pieces he designed for the Polish Theatre's foyer.

As to the Polish applied art scene, Trojanowski's works can be compared to furniture discussed by Anna Sieradzka: pieces by Stanisław Wyspiański, Karol Tichy, Wojciech Jastrzębowski or Karol Maszkowski, which reflected avant-garde tendencies.¹²² They can also be compared to pieces designed by Eugeniusz Dąbrowa-Dąbrowski for the restaurant room at the Old Theatre in Cracow with their characteristic extreme minimalism, the use of straight angles and the total absence of ornamentation. Another design close to Trojanowski's is the study in a small mansion by Józef Czajkowski, exhibited in Cracow in 1912, which shows how the influence of the Biedermeier resulted in the simplification of the form and in the emphasis on the effect of carefully selected veneers.

In his designs for furniture, Edward Trojanowski sought a style that would express the uniqueness and individuality of Polish art. Although initially he turned to folk art, he did not passively copy its decorative motifs. His study of folk craft persuaded him to simplify the forms of pieces of furniture and to experiment with the use of colour in furniture design and interior decoration. Later, his search for a national style encouraged him to seek inspiration in Biedermeier furniture design, which added elegance to his designs, as evident in the proportions of the pieces of furniture and in the use of decorative veneers or sophisticated geometric ornaments. In this manner Trojanowski, while following his own artistic path, developed forms of furniture that effortlessly bear comparison with the avant-garde designs of the Modernist geometric current, as proposed by the Wiener Werkstätte and the Werkbund, which heralded the arrival of Art Déco.

Translated by Klaudyna Michałowicz

120 *The Studio*, 1914, p. 117.

121 *Deutsche Kunst und Decoration*, 1902–1903, no. 9, p. 286, *Deutsche Kunst und Decoration*, 1905, no. 16, p. 419, *Die Kunst*, 1902, no. 3, pp. 144, 145; *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, 1904 no. 16, p. 203.

122 A. Sieradzka, "Początki awangardy w meblarstwie polskim 1904–1914" [The beginnings of the avant-garde in Polish furniture design 1904–1914], in: *Studia z architektury nowoczesnej* [Studies in modern architecture], vol. 2, ed. J. Kucharzewska, J. Malinowski, Toruń, 2007, pp. 131–143.

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Abstract

Three sources of inspiration are discernible in early 20th-century Polish furniture design and especially in the output of artist-designers associated with the Polish Applied Art Association (TPSS), namely, folk art, the historical styles, and the modernistic/geometrical current. Edward Trojanowski's oeuvre in that area combines all these three tendencies and embodies the evolution of a Polish approach to designing furniture; hence it may serve to illustrate the history of Polish furniture design in the early 20th century. Although initially Trojanowski turned to folk art, he did not passively copy its decorative motifs. His study of folk craft persuaded him to simplify the forms of pieces of furniture and to experiment with the use of colour in furniture design and interior decoration. Later, his search for a national style encouraged him to seek inspiration in Biedermeier furniture design, which added elegance to his designs, as evident in the proportions of the pieces of furniture and in the use of decorative veneers or sophisticated geometric ornaments. In this manner Trojanowski, while following his own artistic path, developed forms of furniture that effortlessly bear comparison with the avant-garde designs of the Modernist geometric current, as proposed by the Wiener Werkstätte and the Werkbund, which heralded the arrival of Art Déco.

Keywords: design, furniture, applied art, vernacular style, biedermeier style, interior design