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Władysław Skoczylas

4.04.1883—4.04.1934

#photography & visual arts

Author: [Culture.pl](#)

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Polish graphic artist, painter, educator, critic, independence and artistic activist. Born April 4, 1883, in Wieliczka; died April 8, 1934, in Warsaw.



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Skoczylas was a student of the Kunstgewerbeschule in Vienna (1901-1904) and went on to study painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Krakow (1904-1907). Beginning in 1903 he exhibited his oil paintings and watercolors regularly, supplementing this with occasional presentations of his sculptures, primarily at the Friends of the Fine Arts Society in Krakow. It was at this institution

the founding members and presidents of the "Podhale Arts" Society (1909) and the "Kilim" Cooperative in Zakopane, designing fabrics for the latter. Before World War I he traveled extensively around Europe (France, Italy, Germany, and Switzerland). In 1910-1911 Skoczylas was in Paris, where he traveled to study sculpture with Antoine Bourdelle, which he was nevertheless unable to do (just as he was unable to work with oil paints) because of an allergic affliction of the hands.

In Paris he created his first prints in metal techniques (etching, dry point). In 1913 he spent a year supplementing his education at the Graphic Arts Academy in Leipzig, where he learned woodcutting techniques. From this moment on, these (alongside watercolors) would become his primary means of artistic expression. Skoczylas actively sought to develop the graphic arts - both as an artist and an organizer - and these efforts won him the title of "creator of the modern Polish woodcut". He is recognized above all for freeing the art of woodcutting from its purely applied functions and elevating it to the level of an autonomous artistic technique. As an artist, Skoczylas drew on the forms of folk woodcuts and glass paintings. In search of subjects, he tapped the legends and ethos of the Highlanders of southern Poland (see plates included in the portfolios: **Zbojnicka / Highlander Bandits**, 1918 and **Podhalanska / Podhale**, 1922, illustrations for books like [Władysław Reymont's Legenda / Legend](#), [Stefan Żeromski's Puszcza jodłowa / Fir Tree Forest](#), Jan Kasprowicz's **Taniec zbójnicki / Bandits' Dance**, and others.).

These explorations brought him closer to the Formists, with whom he exhibited between 1917 and 1922. In 1922 he co-founded the Rytm / Rhythm group of painters, with which he worked throughout its existence, that is, to 1932.

He painted romantic, washed out landscapes, often introducing unusual perspectives, as in his numerous views of Kazimierz on the Vistula. He also depicted Highlander motifs in his watercolors. After moving to Warsaw in 1918, he first assumed the position of assistant professor in the Department of Architecture of the Warsaw Polytechnic Institute. Between 1918

(which acquired the status of an academy in 1932), where he headed the Graphic Arts Faculty (1922-1934). A group of his students joined together to form the "Ryt" / "Scratch" Association of Graphic Artists, active between 1925 and 1939. Skoczylas occupied numerous public posts, including that of president of the Polish Artistic Club (1928), director of the Department of Art in the Ministry of Religious Creeds and Public Education (1930-1931), and president of the Art Propaganda Institute (1931). From 1932 to 1934 he was a staff reviewer for the "Gazeta Polska" / "Polish Gazette" and published numerous texts on art in other Polish and foreign periodicals and newspapers.

Selected exhibitions and awards:

- 1910, 1914 - Participant of the 1st and 2nd editions of the Henryk Grohman Graphic Arts Contest, Zakopane and Warsaw (two-time winner of the 1st prize)
- 1925 - International Decorative Arts Exhibition, Paris (Gold Medal and honorable mention)
- 1928 - Amsterdam Olympics International Art Competition (3rd prize)
- 1929 - Universal National Exhibition, Poznan (Great Gold Medal)

Author: Maryla Sitkowska, Museum of the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, December 2001

Works