



face value	<b>20 zł</b>
metal	<b>925/1000 Ag and paints: red, yellow, green and blue</b>
finish	<b>proof</b>
dimensions	<b>length: 28.00 mm width: 40.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>28.28 g</b>
mintage	<b>64,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** Stylised image of Jacek Malczewski's painting "Death". On the right below, an image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland. Around the Eagle, the circumscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA, the year of issue: 2003, and 20 ZŁ. The Mint mark:  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left talon.

**Reverse:** Self-portrait of Jacek Malczewski from his painting "Self-Portrait in Armour". The inscription: JACEK / MALCZEWSKI above, the dates 1854-1929 below. A palette and three paintbrushes in the lower right-hand corner, with red, yellow, green, and blue paints on the palette.



face value	<b>2 zł</b>
metal	<b>CuAl5Zn5Sn1 alloy</b>
finish	<b>standard</b>
diameter	<b>27.00 mm</b>
weight	<b>8.15 g</b>
mintage	<b>600,000 pcs</b>

**Obverse:** An image of the Eagle established as the state Emblem of the Republic of Poland; a palette and two paintbrushes on the left. An inscription: 2 ZŁ below, the semi-circumscription: RZECZPOSPOLITA POLSKA and the year of issue: 2003, above. The Mint mark:  $\frac{m}{w}$ , under the Eagle's left talon.

**Reverse:** Self-portrait of Jacek Malczewski from his painting "Self-Portrait in Armour". Around, the circumscription: JACEK MALCZEWSKI 1854 – 1929.

**On the edge:** an inscription: NBP eight times repeated, every second one turned by 180°, separated by stars.

*Coins designer: Ewa Tyc-Karpińska*

*Coins struck by the State Mint in Warsaw.*

*Printed by NBP Printing Office*

# Collector's Coins



On 10th December 2003 the National Bank of Poland, is putting into circulation collector's coins depicting the painter Jacek Malczewski, with the following face values:

- 20 zł – struck in silver, in proof finish,
- 2 zł – struck in standard finish, in Nordic Gold (CuAl5Zn5Sn1) alloy.

Jacek Malczewski, the best known Polish painter of the turn of the 20th century, an outstanding representative of the *Młoda Polska* modernist movement, endowed with an particularly rich imagination, has

always aroused fascination and admiration, and has made an enduring name for himself in the history of Polish painting. His works adorn many museum and private collections. Forgeries of his canvases were being made already during his lifetime; in 1912 Malczewski forgers were being prosecuted in court in Cracow.

Jacek Malczewski was born on 15<sup>th</sup> July 1854 in Radom and was brought up in a family of impoverished Polish landed gentry with a patriotic tradition and broad cultural horizons. He was strongly influenced by his father, a well-educated man who had a deep appreciation of the writings of Mickiewicz and Słowacki,

– POLISH PAINTERS of the TURN of 19th and 20th CENTURIES –

and was enthusiastic about the fine arts. His father carefully selected tutors for him. One of them was Adolf Dygasiński, a talented teacher and writer, a combatant in the January Uprising of 1863, who later became Jacek's friend of many years. The young Malczewski betrayed an interest for the fine arts already in his childhood. He would fill copybooks with drawings of plants and animals, little portraits, copies from engravings by Juliusz Kossak and Gustav Doré. In 1871 he came to Cracow to attend St. Jacek's Grammar School. From that time on he became permanently associated with Cracow and its art milieu.

Already in 1872, during his schooldays, Jacek Malczewski was attending art classes held by the painter Leon Piccard, as well as classes in the School of Fine Arts. A year later he left school and, on the instigation of Jan Matejko, enrolled for regular studies in painting. In addition to following the regular syllabus at the art college, Malczewski also practised anatomical drawing and made the illustrations to editions of Słowacki's *Lilla Weneda* and Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But studying in Cracow under Matejko's guidance and the Academic approach to teaching did not satisfy Malczewski. In 1876 he stayed for several months in Paris, where he enhanced his skills in the studio of Henri Lehmann at the Ecole des Beaux Arts. He was not interested in the new trends in the arts; he was far from appreciative of Impressionism; what he prized above all were drawing and shape. As he used to say later on, he never painted fog. He visited museums and art galleries, and avidly read the descriptions of the Siberian "prisons" by the American traveller George Kennan, and he thought about Poland. This was the time when he painted his oil and water-colour sketches inspired by the works of Słowacki, which he would later develop time and again. After his return to Cracow in 1887 he again enrolled in Matejko's studio, but attended for a short time, as he could not agree with his tutor's approach to the artist's tasks. Unlike Matejko, who thought art should illustrate the events of history, Malczewski believed art should refer to current problems.

In 1880 he visited Italy for the first time. Four years later he was a member of Karol Lanckoroński's expedition to Greece and Turkey, for whom he did the drawings and sketches. At the close of 1885 he spent a few months in Munich. In the 1880s Jacek Malczewski pursued a trend in his work he had initiated during his stay in Paris, i.e. patriotic subjects relating to the suffering of the Polish people. He now painted scenes from Słowacki's poem *Anhelli*; his picture *The Death of Ellenai* (1881-82) was exhibited in Cracow and enjoyed a great deal of popularity. He also painted pictures which directly told the story of Polish deportees to Siberia and the tragedy of their everyday lives: *Siberian Exile* (1883), *Letter-Reading in Siberia* (1884), *Sunday in the Mine* (1884), *Overnight Stay* (1885-86), *Death in Siberia* (1891), *Christmas Eve Dinner in Siberia* (1892).

This was an important time in his private life: on 29<sup>th</sup> October 1887 he married Maria Gralewska, in 1889 their daughter Julia

was born, and in 1892 their son Rafał, who would become as well-known painter and writer. In 1887 his painting *Na etapie (Siberian Exile)* received an award from the Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences – the first of numerous prizes, distinctions and medals awarded to him at home and in Europe.

Malczewski started the 1890s with a trip to Italy; he visited Munich again, where he became interested in the work of the Symbolists, Arnold Böcklin, Hans Thoma, and Franz von Stuck. In 1892 Jan Matejko visited Jacek Malczewski in his studio, thereby acknowledging his erstwhile rebellious student. The Cracovian milieu dubbed Malczewski Matejko's successor. The 1890s mark the beginning of Malczewski's social work. In 1891 he was one of the authors of an appeal for the creation of a "general artists' association", which was founded a year later. In 1894 he became a member of its board. In 1897 he and a group of other artists founded an artists' society called *Towarzystwo Artystów Polskich "Sztuka"* (the Society of Polish Artists "Art"); and from 1902 on he was a member of *Stowarzyszenie Artystów Polskich* (the Association of Polish Artists). In 1897-1918 he was a member of Secession, the Viennese artists' association.

This was the period when he embarked on his work as a tutor. In 1896 Julian Fałat appointed him to a temporary teaching post in the Cracow School (later, as of 1898, Academy) of the Fine Arts. Two years later he received an assistant professor's appointment. His work in the Academy was short-lived; in 1900 Malczewski handed in his resignation owing to a conflict with Fałat. He returned to the Academy as a professor in December 1910, after Fałat's departure. In 1912-14 he was its rector, and worked in the Academy until 1921. He also taught in a number of girls' schools, colleges and courses: from 1897 in Tola Certowiczówna's art school; from 1899 to 1912 in the Adrian Baraniecki courses for ladies; and from 1908 in Maria Niedzielska's art college. He was a popular and respected figure in Cracow, and each of his exhibitions drew in crowds of visitors.

Around 1900 Malczewski developed a relationship with Maria Balowa, who for many years was his Muse, his ideal woman, his model, and was present in many of his pictures even after they had parted.

The 1890s mark the beginning of the mature phase of Malczewski's Symbolism, which focused chiefly on the fate of his country, man, the artist, and the mystery of art and existence. This was the time when he painted two important canvases: *Melancholy* (1894), in which he combined the patriotic motif with the decadent atmosphere prevalent at the turn of the centuries, and *Vicious Circle* (1895-97), in which he presented an apotheosis of art, creative work, the artist's role, his mission and his freedom. His interest in these subjects would continue to appear in works entitled *Polonia*, the *Poisoned Well* cycle, portraits, mythological subjects, or his

own interpretations of the Bible. In them he was the embodiment of the artist, and he used the motifs of the chimaera, the faun, and the sphinx, fashionable in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as an expression for art and the restlessness accompanying artistic creation.

The subject which pervades all of Malczewski's work is death. In his "Siberian" period and the *Anhelli* pictures he painted canvases which show the process of dying. In his Symbolist period death is personified as a woman, the Grim Reaper, the Angel Thanatos in a feminine shape. Ever majestic, Malczewski's Thanatos manifests the power, resolution, and inevitability of death. The painting of *Death* presented on our coins is Malczewski's best known treatment of the subject. He made it in 1902. A young girl who symbolises the Angel of Death closes the eyes of a tired traveller; she is his liberation at the end of a fatiguing road. In the background there are the buildings of a Polish country house – an allusion to Wielgie or Gardzienice, the country residences of his childhood.

A few years before his death Malczewski started to lose his sight and practically stopped painting. He spent this period at his sister's house in Lusławice and his daughter's one in Charzewice. He died on 8<sup>th</sup> October 1929 in Cracow. While the Sigismund Bell tolled from Wawel Cathedral, crowds accompanied him on his last journey. He was interred next to the painters Henryk Siemiradzki and Stanisław Wyspiański in the distinguished persons' crypt in Skałka Church, Cracow.

Although the art of Jacek Malczewski had its roots in the *Młoda Polska* (the Young Poland) modernist climate, it remained thoroughly original and subjective. It is hard to classify his art and attribute it definitively to any given trend in the Polish arts. Exceptionally diligent, and endowed with an outstanding talent and unique imagination, Malczewski created a world of his own symbols and meanings. He has persisted as one of the greatest individualities in Polish art at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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**All collector's coins are legal tender in Poland.**